Encounter

v. 24 #3

albert camus
A WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

herbert luethy
1914

john wain
T.S. ELIOT

solzhenitsyn
STORIES

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kingsley amis
SCIENCE FICTION

louis kronenberger
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VALEDICTORY

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Paris

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John Gross
Theatre

Ignazio Silone
Rome

George Lichtheim
Hobsbawm

Philip Toynbee
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John Vaizey
Oxford

edited by
Stephen Spender & Melvin J. Lasky
March 1965
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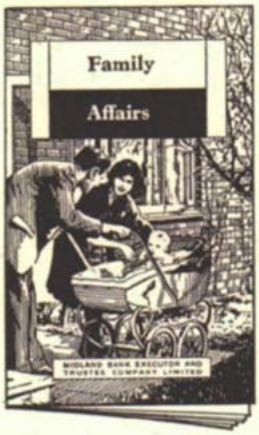

Then as a family man you have, of course, made your will, appointed an efficient executor to administer your estate – and satisfied yourself that he will be able to handle your affairs properly when necessary. You haven't? Then, sir, it is time you did. For the future well-being and security of your dependants are your responsibility – and you will never know what may happen to them if anything happens to you.

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Encounter

Edited by STEPHEN SPENDER *and* MELVIN J. LASKY

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Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Breathing

THERE WAS rain in the night, clouds are drifting over the sky, and there is still an occasional sprinkle. I stand under an apple tree that is losing its blossom—and I breathe. The apple tree and the grass around it are drying after the rain, and there is no name for the sweet and heady smell that intoxicates the air. I draw it deep, deep into my lungs, my whole chest tingles with the fragrance. I breathe and breathe again, shutting my eyes, opening my eyes—I don't know which way is best.

This perhaps is the freedom, the only freedom but the most precious of freedoms, of which prison deprives us: the freedom to breathe like this, to breathe in this place. No food on earth, no wine, not even a woman's kiss is sweeter to me than this air, this heady, blossom-scented, rain-fresh air. What if it is only a tiny garden hemmed in by five-storeyed buildings like cages in a zoo? I no longer hear the back-firing motor-cycles, the howling radiograms, the crackling loudspeakers. So long as I can stand under an apple-tree after rain and just breathe—it is possible to live.

ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN'S *first book, after his release from prison camp in 1956, was* A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. *It appeared originally in the Moscow monthly* Novy Mir *which sold out within hours of publication. Solzhenitsyn continued with short stories and novellas (an English translation of "Matryona's Home" was first published in* ENCOUNTER, *May 1963). The editors of* Novy Mir *recently made a conspicuous announcement of further contributions from him and other liberal writers. Some of his recent unpublished prose, like the scenes and sketches—"prose poems," perhaps—we offer here (again in Harry Willetts' translation), circulates in typescript form within Russia, and sometimes beyond.*

Lake Segden

NO ONE EVER writes about the lake or mentions it aloud. All roads to it are blocked, as though it were some enchanted castle, and over all of them hangs a sign, a single mute mark of prohibition.

When you see that mark over your path, whether you are man or beast—turn back! It has been put there by the rulers of this world power. The mark means: no riding, no flying, no walking, no crawling.

And by the roadside sentries with muskets and pistols lie in wait.

Round and round you wander in the silent woods looking for a way through to the lake. But you won't find it, and there is nobody to ask. People have been frightened off and no one ever comes into the wood. All you can do is to follow the muffled tinkle of a cow-bell and pick your way along a cattle track at noontide on a rainy day. Suddenly that great stretch of water will flash upon you from between the trees, and while you are still running you know that this of all earth's places you will love for the rest of your days.

Lake Segden is a circle cut out with compasses. If you stand on one bank and shout —but you won't shout in case someone notices you—only a tired echo will reach the other side.

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It's a long long way. Along the shore-line woods lap the lake in a close embrace. An even, matching row of trees, without a gap. When you get down to the edge you can see all round the enclosed shore: a yellow strip of sand, a fuzz of grey reeds, a flat patch of green grass. The water is so smooth, calm, and unruffled. There is duck-weed here and there near the shore, but elsewhere the water is transparent white, for the bottom is white.

Secluded water. Secluded woods. The lake looks at the sky, the sky at the lake. There may be other things on earth, but who knows—nothing can be seen over the trees. And if there is anything else, it isn't wanted and will never be missed here. This is a place to settle down for good.... Your soul would flow, like the quivering air, between water and sky, and your thoughts would run pure and deep.

It cannot be. A wicked prince, a cross-eyed villain holds sway over the lake: there is his summer house, there his bathing-place. His villainous children fish and shoot ducks from a boat. First a wisp of blue smoke over the lake, after a while the sound of a shot.

Out there, beyond the woods, the countryside toils and moils. But, so that no one can disturb them, all the roads here are barred, the fishing and the game are kept up for them alone. Here are the traces of a camp-fire that someone tried to light: they put it out, then drove him away.

Dear, deserted lake.

Home....

A Poet's Ashes

WHAT IS now the village of Lgovo, and was formerly the ancient town of Olgovo, stands on a cliff high over the river Oka: the Russians of those distant times took a liking to the water, which was fast-running and good to drink, and also to the beauty of the place.

Ingvar Igorevich, who was delivered miraculously from the knives of his brothers, built here, for his soul's sake, the monastery of the Assumption. On a clear day you can see a long way from here, over the rolling water-meadows, and more than twenty miles away on a hill as high as this stands the tall bell-tower in the monastery of St. John the Divine. Batu Khan was superstitious and spared them both.

This place took the eye of Yakov Petrovich Polonsky. He liked it more than any other, and gave orders that he should be buried here. We cannot help imagining that our souls will hover over our graves and gaze on the broad and peaceful countryside.

But the domes have gone, the churches have gone, only half of the stone wall is left, and the holes have been stopped with board fence and barbed wire. Looming over the ancient ruins there are watch-towers, those hideous scare-crows that we know so well ... and in the gateway of the monastery—GUARD-HOUSE. A poster with the caption *"Peace among the Nations"* shows a Russian worker with an African child in his arms.

We pretend to know nothing, and one of the warders, off-duty and wearing a singlet, explains to us:

"Used to be a monastery here. Second biggest in the world. The biggest was in Rome, I think. Moscow only had the third biggest.

"The place was a children's settlement once, and the boys, of course they know no better. They made a mess of all the walls and smashed the ikons. Then a collective farm bought the two churches for forty thousand roubles—for bricks, to build a six-row cow-shed.

"I got taken on myself. They paid fifty kopeks for whole bricks and twenty for halves. Only the bricks weren't easy to pick out—it was all chunks of brick and mortar. A vault was found under the church, and there was a bishop lying there. Nothing left of him but his skull. But his robe was still in one piece. Two of us tried to tear it off, but we couldn't...."

"Yes. Well, according to the map the poet Polyansky's grave should be somewhere here. Can you tell me where it is?"

"You can't get to Polyansky. He's in the

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restricted zone.[1] You can't get to him. And anyway, what's there to see? Just a broken down memorial. Wait a bit though." The camp-guard turned to his wife—"Didn't they dig Polyansky up?"

His wife, cracking sunflower seeds on the porch, nodded: "Of course. He was taken off to Ryazan."

The camp-guard couldn't help laughing. "Got his release, eh. . . ."

The Duckling

A COMICAL yellow duckling, wobbling on its thin little legs, its whitish belly bobbing up and down in the wet grass, runs in front of me and cheeps: "Where is my mama? Where are all my family?" It isn't really his mama at all. They put some duck eggs under a hen, and she sat on them together with her own and warmed them all alike.

Now it looks like rain and their little house—an upturned basket with no bottom —has been carried under shelter and covered with sacking. The others are all there, but this one has got lost. Come on then, little thing, come into my hand.

What keeps body and soul together in this tiny creature? He weighs nothing at all, his little black eyes are like beads, his feet are like a sparrow's, just one little squeeze and there would be nothing. And yet—how warm he is. His little beak, pale pink as a lacquered finger-nail, is already shovel-flat. His feet are already webbed, he is as yellow as all his kind, his downy wings are already sprouting. And look how different he is in character from his brothers.

We are the ones who will shortly be flying to Venus. Even now, if we all worked together with a will, we could plough up the whole earth in twenty minutes. But, with all our atomic might, never, never shall we be able to synthesise in our retorts, nor even to assemble from bones and feathers ready-made —a weightless, puny, and pathetic little yellow duckling.

[1] Area prohibited to the inmates in a concentration camp.—*Tr. Note.*

Reflections in Water

ON THE SURFACE of swift-running water you cannot make out the reflections of objects near or distant. Even if it is not muddy, even if it is free of foam, reflections in the ceaselessly wavering ripples, the boisterously shifting race are deceptive, vague, incomprehensible.

Only when, from stream to stream, the current has reached a placid estuary, or in still backwaters, or in small lakes with never a tremulous wave can we see in the mirror-smooth surface the smallest leaf of a tree on the bank, every fibre of a fine-combed cloud, and the intense blue depths of the sky.

So it is with you and me. If, try as we may, we never have and never shall be able to see, to reflect the truth in all its eternal fresh-minted clarity, is it not simply because we are still in motion, still living?. . .

The City on the Neva

ANGELS lamp in hand bow down around the Byzantine dome of St. Isaac's. Three fluted golden spires greet each other across the Neva and the Moika. Lions, griffins, and sphinxes keep watch over treasures or doze and dream. Victory's team of six leap over Rossi's cunning crooked arch. There are hundreds of porticos, thousands of columns, horses rearing, bulls straining. . . .

How fortunate that nothing else can be built here!—no pastry-cook's sky-scraper wedged into the Nevsky, no five-storied box slapped down by the Griboyedov Canal. The most eminent and incompetent architect of the lot could not with all his influence get a construction site near the Chernaya or the Okhta.

So alien to us—and yet our greatest glory —this magnificence.

How delightful it is now to stroll along these avenues! But other Russians, clenching their teeth and cursing, rotted in the

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sunless bog to build all this beauty. The bones of our forefathers caked and fused and petrified into palaces—yellow, brown, red and green palaces.

It is awesome to think that perhaps our own shapeless and wretched lives, our explosive disagreements, the groans of the executed and the tears of their wives, will all be clean forgotten. Will from this, too, come perfect and undying beauty?

The Ants and the Fire

I TOSSED a rotten log on the fire without noticing that it housed a dense colony of ants. As the wood began to crackle the ants poured out and ran around in despair. They ran about the surface of the log, shrivelling and burning to death in the blaze. I took a grip on the log and rolled it to one side. Many of the ants escaped now, running on to the sand and the pine needles.

But strangely enough they did not run right away from the fire.

As soon as they had mastered their dread, they turned back, ran around in circles, as though some force was drawing them back to their abandoned homeland—and there were many who even swarmed back on to the burning log and scurried about on it until they perished.

Starting the Day

AT SUNRISE, thirty young people ran out into the clearing, lined up facing the sun, and started bending, squatting, bowing, lying face downwards, stretching their arms outwards, raising their arms above their heads, and rocking backwards and forwards on their knees. This went on for a quarter of an hour.

From a distance you might imagine that they were praying.

No one in our time finds it surprising if a man gives careful and patient daily attention to his body. But people would be outraged if he gave the same attention to his soul.

No, they weren't saying their prayers. They were doing their morning exercises.

A Storm in the Mountains

IT CAUGHT us on a pitch-black night on the mountainside. We crawled out of our tents—and were speechless. It was coming towards us from over the Ridge.

There was nothing in the world but darkness—no above, no beneath, no horizon. Then there was a rending flash of lightning, the darkness was divided from the light, the gigantic mountains of Belolakaya and Djuguturlyuchat stood out, and the black pines towering around us looked as high as the mountains. Just for a moment we half-believed that land already existed, then once more all was darkness and the abyss.

The flashes were coming closer, darkness alternated with blinding light, a white glow, a pink glow, a mauve glow, and time and time again the mountains and the pine trees appeared, just where they were before, awed us with their majestic size, and when they vanished again it was impossible to believe that they existed.

The voice of the thunder filled the ravines and the ceaseless roar of rivers could no longer be heard. Like the arrows of the Lord of Hosts the lightning flashes fell from on high upon the Ridge and split into wriggles and dribbles of light as though they were shattering against the rocks or smiting and shattering some living thing.

And we forgot our fear of the lightning, the thunder and the downpour, for a drop in the ocean does not fear the hurricane. We became insignificant and grateful particles of the world. A world created to-day, from nothing, right before our eyes.

The Elm Log

WE WERE SAWING firewood, picked up an elm log, and cried out in surprise—all that time since the trunk had been trimmed, and uprooted by a tractor,

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and sawn into pieces, and the pieces flung into barges and on to lorries, and stacked and tipped out on to the ground—and still the elm log had not given up! It had put out a new shoot, which might become an elm itself, or a leafy rustling branch.

We had already placed the log on the saw-horse—as though on the headsman's block—but we could not bring ourselves to cut into it. How could we saw it? It wanted to live too! Just look how much it wanted to live—more than we ourselves did!

Sharik

A BOY on our yard keeps a little dog called Sharik on a chain. They tied him up when he was just a puppy.

One day I took him some chicken bones while they were warm and smelt good. But the boy had just let the poor creature off his chain for a run. The snow in the yard lay thick and fluffy. Sharik bounded about like a hare, on his back legs one minute and his front legs the next, rushing from corner to corner of the yard and back again, with snow on his muzzle.

He ran to me, the shaggy creature, and jumped all over me, sniffed the bones—and off he went again, up to his belly in snow.

"I don't want your bones," he seemed to say, "just give me my freedom."

Yesenin's Birthplace

FOUR VILLAGES, one after another, stretch monotonously along one street. There are no orchards, and no nearby woods, only rickety fences and garishly painted window-frames. An obese and majestic pig scratches itself against the pump in the middle of the road. An orderly procession of geese turns in unison to send a martial challenge after the fleeting shadow of a bicycle. Busy hens scratch up the roadway and the back-yards, searching for food.

The village shop at Konstantinovo is in a hut like a rickety hen-house. There are herrings. All sorts of herrings. There are sweets, a sticky mass of those satin cushions that people everywhere stopped eating fifteen years ago. And there are black loaves the size of hefty cobblestones, loaves that need a chopper, not a knife.

Flimsy partitions divide the Yesenin house into cubby-holes and hutches—there's nothing you could call a room. In the garden there is a windowless shed, and there used to be a bath-house. Sergei crept out there in the dark to write his first verses. Beyond the stick fence there is just a strip of field.

I walk round this village which is like so many others, where everybody is preoccupied with getting a living, making money, keeping up with the neighbours . . . and I am excited. A heavenly fire once scorched this neighbourhood, and it still makes my cheeks burn. I come out on the sloping bank of the Oka, gaze into the distance and marvel: can he have been looking at that dim strip of scrubby forest in the distance when he said mysteriously: *"The pinewoods ring with the weeping of woodcocks . . ."* and did he think of these meadows along the bends of the Oka when he wrote about *"stooks of sun in the lap of the water. . . ."*?

What nugget of talent did the Creator fling into this hut, into the heart of this rowdy peasant lad, who looked round amazed and found so much raw beauty—at the stove, in the pens, on the threshing-floor, in the wasteland outside the village—beauty which people had trodden under foot for a thousand years and never noticed?

The Kolkhoz Rucksack

WHEN YOU'RE travelling on a country bus and somebody gives you a painful jab in the chest or the ribs with its sharp corners—don't start a row, but take a good look at it, that basket of plaited bast on its broad strap of frayed canvas. A woman takes milk and cottage cheese and tomatoes to market in it, for herself and two neighbours, and brings four dozen loaves from town to feed three families.

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It is roomy, stout, and cheap, this country-woman's rucksack; its gaudy sporting brethren, all side-pockets and shining buckles, cannot compare with it. It holds so much weight that even over a jerkin its strap is too much for a practised peasant shoulder. So the women have made it the fashion to swing the plaited basket on to the small of the back and pass the strap over their heads like a horse-collar. Then the weight is evenly distributed over shoulders and breast.

Brother writers! I don't ask you to try one of these baskets on your own backs. But if you get jostled—just travel by taxi.

We Shall Live Forever

ABOVE ALL things we have begun to fear death and the dead.

If we hear of someone dying we avoid writing to the family or visiting them: we don't know what to say about it, about death. We're ashamed even to mention a cemetery seriously. You wouldn't tell them at work that "I can't come in on Sunday, I have to go and visit my people in the cemetery." What sort of nonsense is that—visiting people who can't share a meal?

You want to move a dead man from one town to another? You must be crazy—nobody will give you room on a train for that. And the dead are no longer borne slowly through the town with music, if they're nobodies, but rushed away in lorries.

At one time they used to go round our cemeteries on Sundays singing joyously and swinging sweet-smelling censers. The heart was at peace, and the scar which inevitable death had left on it throbbed less painfully It was as though the dead were looking at us from under their little green mounds with a little smile and saying: "Never mind! Never mind!"

But nowadays, if the cemetery is kept up at all, there are notice-boards saying: "GRAVE OWNERS! *You are liable to a fine if you fail to remove last year's litter!*" And more often than not they roll the ground flat and level it with bull-dozers to make room for a stadium or a park of culture.

And then there are those who have died for their country, as you and I may yet have to die. Our church used to set aside a day for them—for remembering warriors fallen on the field of battle. Britain remembers them on Poppy Day.

Every nation does the same—sets aside a day for thinking about those who gave their lives for others. For us in this country more lives were given than anywhere else, yet we have no such day.

If we keep looking back at all those who lost their lives . . . who will do the bricklaying? We have lost husbands, sons, sweethearts in three wars. . . . Get lost, you pests, under your painted wooden obelisks . . . let us get on with living.

Because we're going to live forever

This is the peak of our 20th-century philosophy.

Along the Oka

WHEN YOU TRAVEL the by-roads of Central Russia you begin to understand the secret of the pacifying Russian countryside.

It is in the churches. They trip up the slopes, ascend the high hills, come down to the broad rivers like princesses in white and red, they lift their bell-towers—graceful, shapely, all different—high over mundane timber and thatch, they nod to each other from afar, from villages that are cut off and invisible to each other they soar to the same heaven. And wherever you wander in the fields or meadows, however far from habitation, you are never alone: from over the hayricks, the wall of trees, and even the curve of the earth's surface the head of some bell-tower will beckon to you from Gorki Lovetskie, or from Lyubichi, or from Gavrilovskoye.

But when you get into the village you find that not the living but the dead greeted you from afar. The crosses were knocked off the roof or twisted out of place long ago. The

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dome has been stripped, and there are gaping holes between its rusty ribs. Weeds grow on the roofs and in the cracks in the walls. Usually the graveyard has not been kept up, the crosses have been flattened and the graves churned. The murals over the altar have been washed by the rains of decades and obscene inscriptions scrawled over them.

On the porch there are barrels of lubricating oil and a tractor is turning towards them. Or else a lorry has backed into the church doorway to pick up some sacks. In one church there is the shudder of lathes. Another is locked up and silent. In another and another there are groups and clubs. *"Let Us Aim at High Milk Yields!" "A Poem About Peace." "A Heroic Deed."*

People were always selfish and often unkind. But the evening chimes used to ring out, floating over villages, fields, and woods. Reminding men that they must abandon the trivial concerns of this world, and give time and thought to eternity. These chimes, which only one old tune keeps alive for us, raised people up and prevented them from sinking down on all fours.

Our forefathers put all that was finest in themselves, all their understanding of life into these stones, into these bell-towers.

Ram it in, Vitka, give it a bash, don't be afraid!

Film-show at six, dancing at eight o'clock. . . .

Conversation with a Giraffe

Hail, lofty,
necking quizzically
through the topgallant leaves
with your lady.

No good eyeing
the distance from me to you
though I confess I should like
to caress your tender horns
and toboggan down your neck,
perhaps swing on your tail.

Your dignity fools no one,
you get engagingly awkward
when you separate and collapse
yourself to drink;
and have you seen
yourself cantering?

Alright, alright, I know
I'm ugly standing still,
squat-necked, so-high.

Just remember there's one or two
things about you too, hey
like, like, birds now:
they fly much higher.

Douglas Livingstone

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Herbert Luethy

The Folly and the Crime

Thoughts on 1914

"Hochmuth kommt vor dem Fall!" (Pride goeth before a fall!)—marginal comment by the Kaiser Wilhelm II to a despatch from the German ambassador in St. Petersburg, July 13th, 1914.

IN THE RETROSPECTIVE introduction that John Maynard Keynes wrote in 1919 to *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* he exclaims: "What an extraordinary episode in the economic progress of man that age was which came to an end in 1914!" And he refers to "the intensely unusual, unstable, complicated, unreliable, temporary nature of the economic organisation by which Western Europe has lived for the last half century." In retrospect he evokes that continental European unity and solidarity which the Treaty of Versailles had destroyed. In a later chapter of that book, *Europe after the Treaty*, he remarks: "... it will no longer be part of my purpose to distinguish between the inevitable fruits of the War and the avoidable misfortunes of the Peace." He thus makes the men of 1919, who had shown themselves incapable of putting the world back into joint, responsible for the fact that it was out of joint; and it was this tone of accusation mingled with lament that turned his book into an explosive political pamphlet which can be (and has been, repeatedly) misused. Yet his evocation of that unity, smashed into fragments in "Europe's civil war," for the re-creation of which nobody in 1919 seemed to spare a thought, gave to his writing both the force and the inner discernment of truth. "But Europe is solid with herself; France, Germany, Italy, Austria and Holland, Russia and Rumania and Poland, throb together, and their structure and civilisation are essentially one. They flourished together, they have rocked together in a war ... and they may fall together." And this Europe for whose internal integration "all statistical evidence cried aloud" was more than just the European continent. From the point of view of a well-to-do Londoner—though a cosmopolitan citizen of Berlin, Hamburg, Brussels, or Paris would have suited Keynes' purpose equally well—Keynes painted a picture of the world as it had been, a boundlessly open world across which people, goods, money, news, beliefs, and ideas were free to travel, safe in the assurance of almost identical legal protection everywhere, bothered only by tolerable customs formalities, a world in which the produce of the most distant lands was regularly delivered on the citizen's own doorstep, a world permanently linked by a reliable international postal and telegraphic service that straddled all the continents, a world in which locked doors apeared to be a thing of the past. The citizen of Europe

> ... could secure forthwith, if he wished it, cheap and comfortable means of transit to any country or climate without passport or other formality, could despatch his servant to the neighbouring office of a bank for such supply of the precious metals as might seem convenient, and could then proceed abroad to foreign quarters, without knowledge of their religion, language, or customs, bearing coined wealth upon his person, and would consider himself greatly aggrieved and much surprised at the least interference. But, most important of all, he regarded this state of affairs as normal, certain, and permanent, and any deviation from it as aberrant, scandalous, and avoidable. The projects and politics of militarism and imperialism, of racial and cultural rivalries, of monopolies, restrictions, and exclusion, which were to play the serpent to this paradise, were little more than the amusements of his daily newspaper, and appeared to exercise almost no influence at all on the ordinary course of social and economic life, the internationalisation of which was nearly complete in practice.

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IT WAS THE FUNCTION of the newspapers to entertain, and each morning with his breakfast the citizen received not only the latest commodity and stock market prices but also his daily dose of political excitement, for this too was provided in that sensible, comfortable world. Businessmen might travel around the world in the greatest security, safe in the knowledge that if some remote mob of foreigners were to harm them or their interests European gunboats would be speedily on the spot to restore order. But politics and the exercise of power remained dangerous pursuits, and not only in the old autocracies, from Russia and Turkey to China, where revolution simmered. Between 1880 and 1914 Heads of State were shot down like grouse in August by socialist and nationalist revolutionaries, anarchists, *Carbonari*, *Komitadshis*, and other conspirators: Tsar Alexander II of Russia, two Presidents of the United States, one President of France, one King of Italy, one Shah of Persia, one King of Serbia together with his queen, one King of Portugal together with his heir, one King of Greece, not to mention the many attempts that failed when bombs were tossed at State coaches or royal bridal couples, nor the great bag of smaller fry, grand-dukes, ministers, and other important persons who, particularly in Russia, the Balkans, the Near East, and Latin America, were shot at the drop of a hat. It was, in fact, only in Germany, where public discipline was exemplary, and in England, where such goings-on were viewed as being in very bad taste indeed, that assassination was not the order of the day. After the House of Romanov, the House of Habsburg was the most sorely tried of the reigning dynasties. During the Emperor Franz-Josef's long reign his brother, Maximilian, was shot in Mexico; his wife, the Empress Elizabeth, murdered in Geneva; his only son, the Crown Prince Rudolf, was found dead as the hero of an obscure and famous melodrama.

Of all these distressing deaths, none came as less of a shock to the aged monarch and his court than the news that the nephew he disliked, his unpopular heir Franz Ferdinand, had been assassinated along with his morganatic wife in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. Assassination was for royalty an occupational hazard. Nor had the Archduke made any attempt to minimise the risks: despite all warnings he had insisted on presiding over a military demonstration in wild and turbulent Bosnia, only a few miles from the border of warlike Serbia where the murder of princes was a national pastime. The date chosen with exquisite tactlessness for this military display was the anniversary of the Battle of Kossovo which had marked the destruction of the old Greater Serbia. He insisted on driving through Sarajevo in an open car: and in such circumstances, as he himself remarked, he must expect "a bullet or two." Even after the first bomb attempt on his life had failed, the local governor, Potiorek, without taking any precautions, allowed him to ride about, once again in his open car, through precisely the same streets as before. In any less paternalistic society Potiorek would surely have been dismissed, if only for inefficiency. The young Bosnian's second bullet, intended for Potiorek, inadvertently killed the Archduke's morganatic wife, causing the normally gentle but chivalrous people of Vienna to cry for bloody vengeance. Even so, the Imperial police had laid their hands on the murderer and his principal accomplices. They had only to string them up, quickly and ostentatiously, and the Austrian thirst for vengeance would have been slaked. Instead, Princip was left to languish in Theresienstadt while a war was mounted to crush Serbia.

Be that as it may, the European press, in that silly season of July 1914, had more spectacular sensations to offer its readers in London and Paris than this incident in the savage Balkans. In Paris the public was goggle-eyed at the trial for murder of Madame Caillaux, wife of a former Prime Minister, who had shot Calmette, the editor of *Le Figaro*: she pleaded justification, and the court accepted her plea. For England there were problems on her own doorstep, in the form of military mutiny and incipient civil war in Ireland.

There were plenty of serpents at large in paradise. But the folly of political passion was accepted and cast scarcely a shadow across the realm of commonsense in which the world's economy was transacted: this was the serious business of serious men, while politics was a mere shooting gallery for amateurs.

Vienna's Leisurely Wrath

IT IS FREQUENTLY said that the age which ended in 1914 was an age of peace. This remark requires a great deal of qualification. Of the twenty years that preceded 1914 there was not one which was not marked by a real, shooting war—though these might be "only against

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the Turks" or overseas—or by a major international crisis complete with sabre-rattling. Even if the long and bloody colonial campaigns are dismissed as mere police operations—though they almost led to a real Franco-British war over the Sudan and to a Russo-British one over Persia—the military chronology of these two decades remains very impressive: the Sino-Japanese War, the Italo-Abyssinian War, the Greco-Turkish War, the Spanish-American War, the Boer War, the Boxer Rising, the Russo-Japanese War, the First Moroccan Crisis, the Bosnian Annexation Crisis, the Second Moroccan Crisis, the Italo-Turkish War, the First Balkan War, the Second Balkan War.... In retrospect one can even follow the powder trail by which the spark struck at the time of the carving up of Africa travelled towards the powder-keg waiting in south-east Europe.

It begins with the Italians' notorious campaign for the conquest of Tripoli, out of which they "retreated forward," into the Aegean and towards the Dardanelles. This was the signal for a general attack by the Balkan nations upon their historic arch-enemy, the Ottoman Empire, and the succession of Balkan wars out of which the peasant democracy of Serbia emerged as a great power by Balkan standards. To Austria, whose policy since Metternich's days was based on a natural solidarity with the decaying Ottoman Empire, this result was intolerable. Therefore Vienna set the Balkan States at one another's throats. She harassed Serbia with trade barriers and bureaucratic arrogance, resorted to violence to cut her off from access to the sea, and waited for an occasion when no conference of the Great Powers should prevent Austria from having her "day of reckoning" with Serbia.

THE RESEARCHERS into the problems of "war guilt" never had to worry about whether or not the Vienna government in 1914 wanted its limited war against Serbia. It did. But no logical process leads inexorably from this fact to the stampede into world war. Year after year had seen conflict in the Balkans and conflict in the colonies—both of approximately equal importance so far as European politics went—but the "Concert of the Great Powers" had always hitherto succeeded in localising such conflicts and then in finding an internationally acceptable solution.

There was nothing in the Austro-Serbian dispute that made it less amenable to control by European diplomacy than any of the dozens of disputes that had preceded it—nothing save its emotional amalgamation with the conflicts of nationalities within the Austro-Hungarian Empire itself. And for this "insoluble problem" neither the Serbian government nor its propaganda was in any way responsible; responsibility lay with the constitutionally justified claim of the Hungarian feudal state to be the dominant race within the Empire, and in the indefinable but equally constitutional determination of the inchoate and nameless "other half of the Empire," above all its German-speaking element, to remain true to the "Habsburgian concept of the State." These internal tensions, confused and confusing as they might be, were neither catastrophic nor beyond hope of resolution. Nobody, neither Masaryk nor Beneš from within, nor any responsible Russian, French, or British statesman of the hostile world without, wished in 1914 to see the Danubian Monarchy collapse. Indeed it remained an article of faith until well on in the war that that monarchy was a providential gift to Europe and its continued existence a necessity, though doubts were beginning to be expressed as to how or even whether it could be given a sounder basic structure once the aged father-figure of Franz-Josef should have departed. But the feverish interchange of views between the European governments (while Vienna remained ostentatiously unconcerned as to what those views might be) reveals that there was no demand—including even the military occupation of Belgrade—that Austria might make on her unruly Serbian neighbour that the Great Powers would have refused to accept. Though Austria had adduced no proof for her accusation that the Serbian government was responsible for the Archduke's murder, the Powers were not for that reason prepared to refuse her almost any form of satisfaction she might demand from Serbia. Indeed, the military occupation of Belgrade was awaited daily, and falsely reported as having happened every few days throughout the crisis, and none was more astonished at the Austrians' delay than the Cabinet in St. Petersburg.

Yet it was impossible to find out what Austria really wanted, because the Austrian government themselves were incapable of making up their mind about it. On the one hand the Chief of the General Staff, Conrad von Hötzendorf, had long lusted after annexation and wished simply to incorporate Serbia in the Empire on the Bosnian model. On the other hand, the Hun-

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garian Prime Minister, Tisza, had a veto he was quite prepared to exercise. He would not accept any reform or expansion of the Empire, nor tolerate any addition to it of further Slav subject-nations, which might threaten Hungarian domination. Despite lengthy haggling no common denominator could be found between these two points of view save to undertake a punitive expedition *for its own sake*—but with what object and for what purpose? To "teach them a lesson," to "settle accounts with Serbia," or, as the Emperor Franz-Josef had written to the Emperor Wilhelm in a note accompanying a memorandum dated July 5th—and drafted before Sarajevo—"to eliminate Serbia as a political factor in the Balkans." Even in the most confidential interchanges it proved impossible to define the wisdom of the proposed act of punishment in any greater detail than this. And since neither Vienna nor Budapest had any wish to commit themselves as to what should follow a successful invasion of Serbia, neither welcomed enquiry on this score. Austria was acting for emotional reasons, and let no one try to stop her! But this emotional response, comprehensible perhaps in the days immediately after Sarajevo, was postponed. Instead, the gentlemen in the Hofburg spent three weeks drafting an ultimatum to Serbia: they needed that much time to make sure that their ultimatum would be certainly unacceptable. And even then they wryly delayed its delivery until July 25th, that is to say until Monsieur Poincaré had left St. Petersburg, lest the French and the Russians put their heads together to discuss its contents. But, when the Serbian government replied in a document that was a masterpiece of conciliation and submission—they asked only that the most intolerable Austrian demands be submitted to arbitration by the Great Powers or the International Court at the Hague—so great was the Austrians' hurry that within minutes their ambassador had boarded his waiting train and was rolling away from Belgrade. Two days later Prime Minister Berchtold submitted to the Emperor for signature the Austrian declaration of war on Serbia, with the revealing gloss that the Powers might otherwise "make yet another attempt to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, unless a declaration of war had previously clarified the situation."

It was then four weeks since the local incident had begun to swell into a European crisis, and there was indeed a very real danger that a peaceful solution might be imposed. On the day after Austria declared war the Emperor Wilhelm read, belatedly, the Serbian reply to the original ultimatum and even he failed to understand what more it was that the Austrians actually wanted. "Every reason for war has vanished!" he remarked (*damit fällt jeder Kriegsgrund weg!*). It was indeed high time for military action, if only so that when the Germans, too late and suddenly, began to enquire of Vienna what was going on, they could be told that such questions were no longer relevant to the situation. The result was that in St. Petersburg, on the sombre morning of July 30th when the Russian mobilisation decrees were already being posted, the only answer that the German ambassador could give to the Russian Foreign Minister was the nonsensical one that hostilities had already broken out and that "after the war it will still be time to come back to the question of preserving Serbia's sovereignty." In truth hostilities had not yet broken out at all. Four weeks after the assassination all that the emotionalism in the Hofburg had produced was an official document. Action could, and did, wait for a long time yet. The punitive expedition, held up it is true by not altogether unforeseen international complications, finally got under way with the utmost placidity and a grandiose lack of success three months later, when no one any longer remembered what precisely had led to the outbreak of the World War, when the great decisive battles in Flanders and on the Marne, at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes had long ago led the armies into the bloody dead-end of European trench warfare. The curtain-raiser to the tragedy was a vicious, late baroque, bureaucratic, Viennese idyll.

This final and already tired performance of the Radetzky March came like a senile remembrance of the stormy beginnings of a long, long reign. In his manifesto, An Meine Völker, issued on July 28th, 1914, the eighty-four-year-old Emperor Franz-Josef announced his intention "to put an end to Serbia's ceaseless provocation" and thereby "to secure for my States calm at home and a lasting peace abroad." In style, argument, and train of thought this manifesto is a detailed, ghostly, and exact echo of that other manifesto, issued by the twenty-nine-year-old Emperor Franz-Josef on the 26th of April, 1859, when he declared war upon Sardinia-Piedmont. He had then announced that his purpose was

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> "to put an end to the repeated hostile acts carried out for many years by the neighbouring state of Sardinia and recently reaching their high point, directed against the unchallengeable rights of my Crown and my uncontested sovereignty over the Empire entrusted to me by God. . . ."

Half a century had passed, leaving no trace of its passage in the Hofburg. One reads the prose with deep awe; even Metternich appears to us, who have been schooled by disaster, as a wise statesman; and to regret the disappearance of the Danubian Monarchy has long become a nostalgic commonplace. Yet when an institution is bent on self-destruction there is no saving it: the old monarchy believed that it must prove its dubious vitality by a resort to violence.

Death-Wish & Apocalypse

ALL THE SAME it was Berlin that built the main span of the bridge leading from a local incident to a world war. Austria had not the strength to frighten the world and Count Berchtold could only afford the luxury of rebuffing all offers of mediation and ignoring all international repercussions because he knew that behind him, in shining armour, stood the German Empire. The attitude of the *Reich* government throughout that July of 1914 was one of supreme and ingenuous consistency. Their unalterable and much repeated formula was "to localise the conflict," which in their interpretation meant that nobody should be so impertinent as to intervene or offer advice—not even the German government itself. A very firm directive that this was the line to follow—and it was followed until July 28th—had been given by the Kaiser himself when on July 2nd he had expressed his *allerhöchsten* imperial anger at a report from his ambassador in Vienna. That diplomatist had seen fit to warn the Austrian government against the taking of any precipitate step, and Wilhelm II wrote in the margin of his despatch:

> "Who authorised him to do this? . . . it's no business of his whatever, since it's a purely Austrian affair. . . . Tschirschky will please stop all this nonsense. The Serbs must be dealt with, and quickly."

After which the Kaiser embarked for his summer cruise in Scandinavian waters, and with Olympian detachment left the events already in train to run their course. Nevertheless, even on the high seas he found time to read the telegrams and to instruct his docile Chancellor that he must adhere even more rigidly to the chosen "policy of localisation." Thus on July 23rd he was informed that the British Foreign Secretary was pressing both Vienna and Belgrade to accept a peaceful settlement and was anxious that Germany should use her influence in the same direction. The Kaiser, whose marginalia were immediately telegraphed to the Imperial Chancellery, scribbled peevishly on this report:

> "This is monstrous British cheek . . . no concern of mine . . . it's the Emperor Franz-Josef's business! . . . This should be pointed out to Grey clearly and firmly! So that he sees I don't appreciate his little joke."

The effect of such simon-pure "localisation" was to reduce even the activities of the busy little beavers in Vienna's Ballhausplatz to marginal importance. For the spotlight had switched to Germany, which now held the centre of the stage as the great protecting power, forbidding the whole world to show any interest in Serbia's affairs since the resolution of the conflict was, according to Germany, "of domestic concern to Austro-Hungary only."

BETWEEN THE WARS a massive literature was produced in Germany and Austria, the purpose of which was to disprove the War Guilt Clause in the Treaty of Versailles. The principal argumentation of this literature was that, by ignoring poor Bethmann-Hollweg's "localisation" thesis, Russian "intervention" had forced war upon the Central Powers. However, neither all the anti-War-Guilt literature nor the documents that the Bolsheviks published freely after 1917 with the intention of discrediting the Tsarist government have been able to make clear what this guilty Russian "intervention" consisted of, except that Russia, as the one great power that was traditionally involved in all Balkan affairs, strongly insisted on being informed upon what was going to happen to Serbia, and on having a say in it —and it is unhappy that neither the German Emperor nor his Chancellor ever showed a similar curiosity. Russia neither formulated demands nor despatched ultimatums, and there is no evidence that she would have been opposed to Austria receiving "satisfaction" from Serbia in concrete form. But the idea that whatever course Austria might choose to follow in this matter was of no concern whatever to anyone outside the Viennese court was as unacceptable in St. Petersburg as it was in the other capitals of Europe.

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On July 27th Kaiser Wilhelm II cut short his northern cruise and returned to his capital, which distressed Bethmann-Hollweg in his humble manner, for he had been assuring his lord and master that there was no cause for anxiety whatsoever. It was true that Austria had still not produced the promised *fait accompli*; it was true, too, that both Austria and Russia were mobilising, but this had become the normal accompaniment of almost every Balkan crisis since 1909. The ambassadors hurried in and out of the foreign ministries, and the British, in their role of guardian of Europe's balance of power, proposed as usual that a conference be called. But Kaiser Wilhelm had seen, too late, that despite the appearance of normality all was not as it should be. He had lost his self-assurance, and he raged at his Chancellor, at the idiocy of his Austrian ally, at the meanness of the Slavs, and at the perfidy of Albion. But the last-minute attempts of the German government to display some diplomatic activity did not go beyond a play of shadows, insubstantial, confused, and strangely fatalistic, without any other apparent purpose than to escape responsibility for what was going to happen. The beautiful concept of "localisation" had become a cloak-and-dagger game conducted by massive threats, by mobilisation, and finally by a declaration of war on Russia. As only the All-highest, his Chancellor, and his General Staff knew, this declaration involved "for technical reasons connected with the two-front war," an immediate attack on France, the invasion of Belgium, and thus, from the very beginning, a general European war.

ONE OF THE STRANGEST documents of this period is a memorandum that the German *Grosse Generalstab* submitted to the Kaiser and his Chancellor on July 28th, 1914. It contains neither specialised knowledge nor reliable intelligence nor even strategic views that might not have been uttered by any well-informed newspaper reader. The *Grosse Generalstab* was repeating rumours and guesses, and in the principal passage it gave its views on the global situation.

> "The Austro-Serbian incident is a purely private quarrel in which, as has rightly been said, nobody else in Europe would have any real or deep interest, and it would constitute no threat to the peace of Europe, but would rather contribute to the maintenance of the peace, *had not Russia intervened*."

The argument then develops on *post hoc propter hoc* lines, as the chain reaction of mobilisation and counter-mobilisation takes place, until at last Germany is forced into the position of the *schwarze Peter*. And there follow these extraordinary sentences:

> "And thus events must and shall develop unless, one might almost say, a miracle were to occur at the eleventh hour *to prevent a war which would destroy almost the whole of European civilisation for decades to come*. Germany has no wish to precipitate this terrible war. But the German government is aware that a deeply rooted loyalty to her allies is one of the most beautiful traits of German sentimental life: the government would be dealing a fatal blow to this emotion and would be opposing all the sentiments of the German people, if it were not to come to the aid of its ally at a moment when that ally's very existence is at stake."

And so it happened: in order to protect the "purely private" nature of an Austrian operation across the Sava from any sort of foreign intervention—an operation with no discernible objective, and which could still have been settled by international arbitration—the German Empire, acting from motives of the purest altruism and without objectives of its own, plunged all Europe into war.

THE WHOLE PERFORMANCE is too lunatic not to have awakened the darkest suspicions of the historians. Fritz Fischer in his *Griff nach der Weltmacht*[1] has collected an impressive documentation of the fantastic war aims that were germinating in distinguished or mediocre German minds long before 1914 and which, once war had broken out, were transformed into actual plans; but even he does not suggest Germany started the war in pursuit of those "aims," though their very exaggeration does reflect in a way the frivolity with which the Second Reich "stumbled" into disaster. The proud German Empire sailed into war with no clearly defined intentions but only with an incoherent vision of a shapeless and unlimited "world power," and with two decaying hulks of empire, the Austrian and the Turkish, in tow. Their highest ambition could only be self-preservation, since for them there was no longer any possibility of expansion—surely a curious baggage train for an army that was setting forth to conquer the world. Then, once the war had

[1] To be published, in an English translation, by Chatto & Windus in 1965.

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started, plans of conquest and expansion were rapidly drafted, in Berlin as well as in the Allied capitals, where the talk was soon about a Rhine frontier and the possession of the Dardanelles. But neither the documents nor the memoirs of the men involved reveal the formulation of any such plans in the weeks immediately before the war. Rather is the contrary the case. We see the small group of men who ruled the German Empire cocooned in the secrecy that surrounds high office, taking or failing to take irrevocable and fatal decisions while keeping their unsuspecting underlings, who included the financial tycoons, the steel barons, and the shipping magnates, completely and happily in the dark. They were not thinking about what would happen after the war, about war aims, about *Mitteleuropa*, about plans for annexations in the East, West, or overseas. Indeed they do not appear to have been engaged in rational thought at all, save at the most primitive level (*wenn schon denn schon*), in their perpetual preoccupation with the next move in their diplomatic-military chess game. They exchanged diplomatic notes with their adversary with the sole purpose of shifting the responsibility for what was happening from their shoulders to his, blackmailing and feeling blackmailed themselves by the necessity of being always one jump ahead in military preparedness. In his hectic marginalia, and in the string of telegrams from "Willy" to "Nicky" during the three days between the Austrian declaration of war on Serbia and the German on Russia, only one motive on the part of the Kaiser is apparent: he was washing his hands of the guilt for what was to come.

THE FATAL FIRST OF AUGUST in Berlin was a day of conferences and audiences that took place in an atmosphere of confusion and bewilderment. The minutes show that not one of the few people in charge was able now to see the whole of the frightful machinery they had to command, nor to understand the logic and the implications of their own decisions. The Kaiser and the Chancellor suddenly ceased to understand why the German army had to march into France and Belgium when war was being declared on Russia. It had to be explained to them that the only plan of military operations in existence envisaged a war on two fronts beginning with an assault in the West. The military chiefs, Minister of War Falkenhayn, Chief of Staff Moltke, and Admiral Tirpitz (the most bewildered of the three), failed to understand why it was necessary to declare war on Russia with such haste when there was no imminent danger of an attack by Russia and no plan in existence for an invasion of Russia. They had to be instructed in the protocol of diplomatic precedence: ultimatums could not be sent to France and Belgium until a state of war existed with Russia.... And since "time was running out" and it was already "too late" to re-examine the situation, each man was short-circuited in his own department and left to conclude that there was nothing more to be done. No one bothered to work out at this late date what the catastrophe was really all about, nor even how the blame could be shoved on to the Russians.

Several days earlier the Kaiser had received a despatch from his ambassador in St. Petersburg in which he was informed both of Russian mobilisation and of a further demand that a conference of the Great Powers be called. In impotent rage he scribbled in the margin:

> "This leaves me now in no doubt whatsoever: England, France, and Russia *have got together*.... And the stupidity and clumsiness of our ally are to be the snare in which they will catch us.... Using the dilemma of our loyalty as the ally of the venerable old Emperor, a situation is being created for us which will give England the pretext to destroy us while hypocritically posing as being in the right.... The whole mechanism must be mercilessly exposed at once, England's Christian, peace-loving mask roughly torn from her face, and the whole pharisaical peace-hypocrisy pilloried! And our consuls in Turkey and India, our agents, etc., must inflame the whole Muslim world to frenzied rebellion against this hated, lying, unscrupulous nation of shop-keepers; and if we are to bleed to death, then England shall at least lose India. *W.*"

These words reveal no plan of conquest and no proud certainty of victory. Rather do they express a death-wish, a longing for apocalypse. If Germany must go to the wall—but why, in fact, must she?—then all Europe shall go with her, and above all the admired and hated British Empire. The words that issued from the foam-flecked lips of another Supreme War Lord, thirty years later, were not so very different.

THE RATIONAL, orderly, organised world in which Keynes' citizen lived before 1914 was already beginning to appear remote. It still existed, with its world trade, its global economy, its standard of living statistically always rising, the ceaseless interdependence of the European nations whose growth and way of life was

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centred in the north-west. Western Germany, northern France, Belgium, and England were still pouring out to the four corners of the earth that strength and energy which industry, trade, and shipping required in order that the blood might continue to circulate.

But this was not the world of Europe's general staffs entrusted with preparing against possible military contingencies for the creation of which they were, however, not responsible. No more was it the world of the statesmen, preoccupied with their games of diplomacy, power, prestige, and a "public opinion" moulded by slogans and based on patriotism. It must be admitted that the men who held the key positions in the great game of European politics did not include a single player of genius. Grey, Poincaré, Sasonov (unjustly demonised), Bethmann-Hollweg (far too slight a figure even to be a scapegoat), were unimaginative and pedantic bureaucrats whose job was foreign affairs: apocalyptic visions were not at all their style. Yet at the summit of the most powerful military machine kept in a state of perpetual readiness there presided one man, the Kaiser, answerable only to God and his conscience. True, we know that this eternal adolescent loved war games rather than war itself, and that his swagger was in essence only a bourgeois love of display. His second-class mind lies fossilised forever in the comments that he scribbled in the margins of all the State papers that passed across his desk: *"Quatsch! Blech! Blödsinn! Idiot! Gemeiner Hundsfott! Irrenhäusler! Hallunken!"*[2] Such was the customary vocabulary of the All-highest when imparting his views on foreign affairs. But the idealised world in which he lived was that of Richard Wagner's operas, full of Teutons on the march, battles between races and *Nibelungen* glory—as if he reigned in the age of the great migrations and not in the 20th century. In this fantasy world there was no heavy artillery and no machine guns, but only sword and shield, and apart from brief moments of sobriety there were no states called Germany, France, Russia, or Great Britain, but only Teutons, Gauls, Slavs, and Anglo-Saxons.

Eighteen months earlier a situation that was diplomatically almost identical to that of July 1914 had arisen. On December 3rd, 1912, Ambassador Lichnowsky had reported to his Kaiser on a conversation he had had with Haldane, the British Secretary of State for War. Wilhelm II had annotated this with almost prophetic clarity. Haldane had declared that if an Austrian invasion of Serbia led to a general European war it would be difficult for Great Britain not to become involved—"No one expects it of them. They'll help the Gauls!"—that England was anxious to preserve so far as possible the balance of power between the two major groupings—"This'll change!"—and could in no wise tolerate the overthrow of France—"They'll have to, all the same!"—that the balance of power was axiomatic to British policy—"It's a nonsense! ... pure rot!"—that Sir Edward Grey was anxious to play the honest broker—"But he remains a partisan of the Gallo-Slavs against the Teutons!"—and finally there came the Imperial sneer against England's betrayal of her race: "A real nation of shopkeepers! ... So the final struggle between Slavs and Teutons finds the Anglo-Saxons aligned with the Slavs and the Gauls." However, on this occasion the "final struggle" was yet advantageously avoided by the simple device of a Conference of Ambassadors called by Sir Edward Grey.

Nevertheless the Kaiser's marginalia on this earlier occasion were what has since come to be called a self-fulfilling prophecy. After twenty-five years of Wilhelmian statecraft the hallucination of living "encircled by enemies" had, with skilful practice, become almost the reality, or at least was accepted as such in Germany. So, too, the idealised world of *Nibelungen* anguish, in which, as events showed, the mass of German poets and thinkers, petty-burghers and professors were then living, had triumphed over the real world of reason, or, to be more accurate, of simple common sense.

IT WOULD ALL HAVE BEEN quite simple had there been some solid reason for the war, had Austria bluntly demanded a Protectorate in Serbia, or Germany claimed some concrete prerogative, some strong-point or slice of territory either in Europe or abroad. (As France did, as soon as war broke out, with her demand for the return of Alsace-Lorraine; as Russia did with her claim to the Straits.) Such demands would have been a matter of dispute but also and therefore a matter for discussion. The discussion might have failed initially, and war have broken out, but it could always have been resumed once it was established whether or not the demands

[2] In approximate translation: "Rubbish! Tripe! Nonsense! Idiot! Son of a bitch! Maniac! Scum!"

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could be satisfied by military action. But there was absolutely no definable area of disagreement and therefore no problems to be solved, the solution of which would mean peace. It was this that turned the First World War into an insane orgy of destruction. With the lack of any rational declaration of intentions, the formulation of the whole conflict was left to the apocalyptic imagination. Blind hatred reached the level of delirium, because there was nothing, no handhold, to which articulate thought might cling. When in 1916 President Wilson attempted to discover the intentions and wishes of the belligerents in order then to undertake the task of mediating between them, he was acting from the sensible premise that somewhere behind the witches' sabbath there must lie tangible causes. So materialistic an attitude was, however, totally out of tune with the spirit of the age, and only caused the combatants to tap their foreheads sadly. Thinkers, poets, leading journalists everywhere—with the Germanists far ahead of all—had long ago retreated to the age of Attila and Totila. Diplomacy and statecraft might be all very well for dealing with international disputes; but when it came to "the final struggle between Teutons, Slavs, and Gauls" not even Machiavelli himself could have invented a solution. Versailles could not solve it, nor Locarno, nor Munich, and what began in 1914 ended only in 1945.

"... not Will, but Fate"

THE ATTEMPTS to establish war guilt or war innocence that took place during the breathing space between 1919 and 1939 produced the picture of an apparently senseless panic that had plunged Europe into war. All those involved whose word could be trusted were unanimous in their protestations that they "had not wanted it to happen." And what emerged from all the research was the image of a tragedy of fate. Alfred von Wegerer, in his monumental work, *The Outbreak of the War of 1914* (the publication of which coincided with the outbreak of the war of 1939), concludes with this pathetic sentence: "So the outbreak of the World War was an act not of will but of fate!" And no one is ever responsible for *Schicksal*.

[3] Georges Sorel said, in December 1912: "Europe, that graveyard, is inhabited by people who sing before they mutually massacre one another. The French and the Germans will soon be singing. . . ."

Yet the running amuck of 1914 is not to be explained merely in terms of all that had gone before, the conflicts of interests, the rearmament, the intrigues and alliances that had happened since 1815 or 1871 or 1900, nor is it correct to deduce that the final explosion was the inevitable outcome of all these tensions, for this state of affairs had been the diplomats' daily bread for a century *without* such an explosion. Neither is it an adequate explanation to say that war was "in the air," not only in Germany, that cheering mobs and delirious intellectual élites hailed its outbreak with joy, in the belief that "the great experience" would provide an escape from the grey materialism of everyday life.[3] For it was not the cheering mobs who fell upon one another, but admirably disciplined armies who would only march when ordered to and who would never march if that order were withheld. Fate is never quite as anonymous as all this.

The outbreak of the war was due in the first place, and quite simply, to the fact that war was declared, and it was declared in due conformity to all the long-established formalities and after detailed consultation of the relevant works on international law, from Grotius to Bluntschli and Heffter; and, secondly, by the fact that in the preceding weeks every diplomatic alternative to war—the quite routine attempt to solve the crisis by international discussion—had been icily forbidden.

> "I shall not take part. . . . In questions where honour or vital interests are involved one does not seek the opinions of others."

So spoke the Kaiser on July 26th, in reply to a British proposal that the uninvolved powers, Germany, Britain, France, and Italy, should mediate in the Austro-Serbian conflict. And his highly individualistic concept of diplomacy is to be seen in a top-secret document which he sent to the Ministry of the Navy and to the Admiral Staff, with copies to the War Ministry and the General Staff, on July 31st. In this he said that he had, through Prince Heinrich, approached the King of England "who is apparently not at all clear as to what his role and his responsibility in the crisis are." What Prince Heinrich was to say to King George V was this:

> "Instead of proposals for conferences, etc., H.M. the King ought to *order* the Russians and the Gauls, point-blank . . . to desist from mobilising at once and await Austria's proposals. . . . The full responsibility for the most fearful holocaust the world will have ever seen rests fairly and

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squarely on his shoulders, and he will be judged accordingly by the world and by history."

Early on the morning of July 30th the German Chancellor, in an apparent moment of aberration, did telegraph to Vienna the surprising demand that the Austrians should consider international mediation subject to the condition, already accepted in principle by the Powers, that Belgrade "or other places" should be occupied. This was, however, a futile gesture. Before Vienna, in no hurry either to go to war or to return to peace, had even sent a reply, a further telegram from the German Chancellor, despatched at midday on the 31st, cancelled his earlier one: "We await from Austria immediate, active participation in the war against Russia." All the reading and re-reading of the July 1914 documents, all the weighing and re-weighing of the evidence, permit only one possible interpretation of the German attitude: Germany thought she spoke from such a position of strength that all other European discussion must fall silent, and if the mere existence of such overwhelming German strength were not enough to bring this about, then "the guns must speak."

IT IS TRUE that the common man likes to read of positive action in his newspaper, has never had a high opinion of conferences or negotiations, and tends to despise the polite chatter of cookie-pushing diplomats. True, too, that in this respect Wilhelm II was an all too common man. Recent European conferences had been no occasions for garnering glory; without presuming to any great perspectives of world history or wide views of the world's problems, they had, by tedious market-place haggling, sought and found, for better or for worse, compromise solutions. Like all compromises these satisfied none of the parties directly concerned, neither Germany nor France in Morocco, neither Austria, Russia, nor Serbia in the liquidation of the Balkan crises. And for a quarter of a century no German Chancellor had nourished the ambition of being the arbiter of Europe, as Bismarck had been at the time of the Berlin Congresses of 1878–85, a period which had set the final seal of triumph on his whole career: indeed since 1890 the German Empire no longer had a statesman at its helm. Conferences and negotiations at which papers were passed back and forth and the bureaucrats of politics, the chancellor and the diplomats did the work and talking, held no appeal for the martial young Emperor. Since Bülow's attempt to side-track him as a diplomatic dilettante, he had grown thoroughly disgusted with all such goings-on. If this were normal procedure, then of what real use were his invincible army and his magnificent, expensive, new navy? Only when the sabre was rattled did he, the German Kaiser, stand beneath the spotlights, a warning and a threatening figure in the very centre of the stage which, by the Grace of God, was his rightful place. "Pride goeth before a fall."

Maybe the whole secret of July 1914 is really as banal as that platitude which the Kaiser scribbled in the margin of a report describing the atmosphere at the Tsar's court. And the historical background to the "tragedy of fate" may be found in a single passage of Prince Bernhard von Bülow's *Deutsche Politik*. Writing of Bismarck's acts of genius which created the Second Reich, he said:

> By an unsurpassed act of statesmanlike creativeness and audacity, the completion of the task of unifying Germany has been entrusted, not to the political talents of the Germans, which are by heredity their weakest side, but to their innate military virtues, which are their strongest.

Thus when the time came to search for a political issue out of a self-created diplomatic maze, all that the German *Reich* had on hand was the Schlieffen Plan—and nothing more.

Of course there is no proof that a European Conference of Powers would have succeeded, nor that the next crisis would not have been the explosive one. History's might-have-beens are never subject to proof. But with hindsight, and taking into account all the conflicting factors involved, it is hard to see why, despite all the difficulties that might have been expected to arise at such a conference and despite the nature of the demands that Austria might there have made upon Serbia, Count Berchtold and Bethmann-Hollweg should have believed that they could not expect to reach agreement with the other Powers. Whatever Kaiser Wilhelm may have felt about European congresses, conferences, and mediation, the European order which vanished in 1914 knew no alternative other than these to brute force; and throughout a century of crises about far more important subjects of controversy than the Sarajevo assassination, Europe had been conspicuously successful in choosing that alternative. To reject it meant war. And this choice was an act "not of fate, but of will."

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The End of an Almost Ordered World

DURING the 19th century the European Balance of Power had become a very firmly established institution. Upon its permanence all developments in international law, both in the public and the private sectors, were based. How firm it was materially is proved even by the First World War and the fearful fact that once it had started there was no way out. Despite the most reckless use of the most extreme violence, the balance could only be broken when the entire European political system lay at last in ruins. Scores of political scientists and authorities on international affairs have described the procedure which constituted the intrinsic law of the Balance of Power: any one power that attempted to dominate the continent must infallibly call into existence a hostile coalition of all the other powers. And that is what happened, nor could it have happened otherwise.

Only Wilhelmian Germany could have created the coalition that confronted the *Reich* in August 1914, and only a German declaration of war could have brought that coalition into the field against her. It was fashionable at one time to detect a sinister fatality in the defensive alliances and military conventions of the age, and to make them responsible for the World War. But the fact that they were defensive, and were quite incapable of being used offensively, was proved by events as soon as that war began. The Triple Alliance, only recently renewed, was shattered on the day that Germany declared war while only then did the shadowy, unformulated Triple Entente assume reality. The German system of alliances, which yoked Austria to her "historic enemy" Italy, was certainly both fragile and "unnatural," but the opposing group was no less so. Of all the European systems of alliances perhaps the only "natural" one had been the *Dreikaiserbund*, the old Austro-Russo-German alliance cemented by the partition of Poland; and it was precisely these three powers who finally clawed each other over the edge of the abyss in the First World War. But the Dual Alliance, which the Autocrat of All the Russias signed with a French Republic, was regarded as immoral, and the subsequent linking of these two powers with a Britain that was the "historic enemy" of them both and that was generally regarded as being "naturally" favourable to the cause of the German grouping, was automatically put into force by Germany's double declaration of war.

True, the British General Staff had held most secret conversations with their French counterparts concerning a common action in the event of a German attack in the west; but Britain's only formal alliance was the one concluded with Japan against Russia. Without the invasion of Belgium and Bethmann-Hollweg's "scrap of paper" the minority within the British cabinet that was not prepared to accept a German continental domination imposed by force (and therefore always referred to in German literature as the British "war party") would have been unable to impose their views on their cabinet colleagues even in August 1914.

The balance between the European powers, reinforced by the balance of armaments and alliances, had become so intricate that it could not be upset. This was the state of things from which most students of European affairs drew the optimistic conclusion: European war had become an absurdity. They were quite right, and this was overwhelmingly confirmed by four years of immense battles neither won nor lost. They were wrong only in the further conclusion they drew: that because something is absurd, it will not happen.

YET THE European Balance of Power was more than a mere material grouping of forces to render impossible any one power's attempt at continental hegemony. An indissoluble state of co-existence had brought its own institutions into being. Since none of the powers could hope to impose its will, Europe's diplomacy had developed into a collective European "Concert of Powers." And since every territorial shift of power within Europe affected the Balance and thus all the European States, it had become the rule that each conflict as it arose was submitted to arbitration at a conference of the powers. The Concert no longer concerned itself with internal upheavals within the nation-states, since Prince Metternich's attempt to use the Holy Alliance as a police force wherewith to crush all democratic or nationalist revolts had proved a failure: the decade of wars of national unity of 1859-1871 formed a sort of interim period in which localised struggles between neighbouring states, observed closely by an otherwise neutral Europe, had replaced the system of international conferences: this was the decade in which the House of Habsburg was driven back to its Danubian stronghold, and the Kingdom of Italy and the German Empire were created at its expense. But almost as soon as the

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map of Europe had been re-drawn, Bismarck presided triumphantly over a revived European Concert of Powers at the Berlin Conferences of 1875–85, where not only were temporary solutions found to be rankling, such as those to the age-old "Eastern Question"—the conflicts in the Balkans and around the Straits, the only part of Europe where frontiers were being redrawn during the period between 1871 and 1914—but now, for the first time, Europe's congress diplomacy began to take an interest in colonial disputes between the powers. There was the international neutralisation of central Africa as the private property of King Leopold II, the so-called Congo Free State. There was the internationalisation of the great African rivers, and three years later of the Suez Canal, in the interests of world trade. There was codification of the white nations' rights to seize territory in the black world: bilateral or trilateral agreements concerning sovereignty and spheres of influence inaugurated the carving up of Africa. Though the time has passed when these last agreements can be considered consonant with the spirit of international law, they did ensure that "the scramble for Africa," which marked the final epoch of European expansion overseas, proceeded with a minimum of friction between the European powers concerned.

THIS WAS the age of imperialism, but it was an imperialism that enjoyed somehow a good conscience and marched beneath the banner of European civilisation. As late as 1936 Walter Lippmann, in *The Good Society*, could formulate its programme as follows:

> In the end no nation can fail to enter this system where common law prevails: if it is backward, unable or unwilling to make its portion of the earth secure for the new economy of the division of labour, its certain destiny is to be conquered. Unless it is as remote as Tibet, in one way or another it will be brought within the necessary jurisdiction of the Great Society. Nor can any portion of the earth permanently secede from the society of common law: in the end the rebellion will be overcome. For the necessity of common laws throughout the world economy is the necessity of all the multitudes of mankind in all their daily transactions, and its cumulative force is invincible.

And the man who blazed the anti-imperialist trail, John A. Hobson, published his seminal *Imperialism* in 1902, that is to say under the shadow of the Boer War and of the European punitive expedition against China that followed the Boxer Rising. This book, incidentally, provided the most valuable source material for Lenin's theories concerning imperialism, including his thesis about a workers' aristocracy. In this work Hobson foresaw the culmination of this race to dominate the globe not in a war but in a horrifying picture of a European global condominium:

> We have foreshadowed the possibility of even a larger alliance of Western States, a European federation of great Powers which, so far from forwarding the cause of world-civilisation, might introduce the gigantic peril of a Western parasitism, a group of advanced industrial nations, whose upper classes drew vast tribute from Asia and Africa, with which they supported great tame masses of retainers, no longer engaged in the staple industries of agriculture and manufacture, but kept in the performance of personal or minor industrial services under the control of a new financial aristocracy. Let those who would scout such a theory as undeserving of consideration examine the economic and social condition of districts in Southern England to-day which are already reduced to this condition. . . .

Such was the nightmare at the end of the 19th century, a vision of an age of decadence similar to that of Rome at the end of its empire, a depraved, materialistic, plush-and-stucco world. It was from this vision that ever more poets and philosophers averted their eyes as they began to dream of the clarion call that would re-awaken the martial virtues. Intellectual optimists and intellectual pessimists alike overestimated the dangers of peace.

AMONG AUTHORITIES on international law it had, by the end of the 19th century, become standard parlance to refer to the community of European states as a confederation. In the 'seventies James Lorimer and J. C. Bluntschli published a proposed constitution for a federation of these states. Their "sober and modest" proposal was, basically, only that the advisory experience of Europe's collective diplomacy, which had hitherto functioned merely in times of crisis and in an *ad hoc* capacity, should be inherited by a permanent institution and that the existing powers of arbitration exercised by the Concert of Powers should be transferred to a juridical body. The proposed confederation involved nothing more than the institutionalisation of the Balance of Power and the formal acceptance of customary rights already in existence. Yet precisely for this reason there seemed to be no urgency in bringing it about, since the well-

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ordered world of the nation-states functioned as smoothly as if such legal arrangements had already been made. Was the chatter of politicians and diplomats really needed in a world that was visibly and majestically progressing beyond the remnants of national sovereignty and the use of force?

For Keynes' cosmopolitan citizen at the turn of the century national frontiers were little more than the demarcation lines where one body of law officers and policemen took over from another: all these bodies protected persons and possessions, enforced contracts, and guarded the rights of property, in almost identical fashion everywhere, regardless of the individual's nationality. They saw to it that everyone enjoyed freedom to trade and freedom to travel, with the result that there was no need for the State or its politicians to concern themselves with the world's commerce and the global movement of goods. This was true not only in Europe and the Europeanised Western Hemisphere but also in overseas territories under European control and, thanks to concessions, extra-territorial rights, and consular courts, even in those exotic empires whose native masses still lived according to primitive and backward laws and customs. This world-wide dissemination of European guaranty and the transformation of the whole globe into a single republic of trade was the proclaimed purpose of "imperialism," and imperialism meant, briefly, a European world order. Also those technical installations needed for world trade and world communications that did not, like the gold standard, function automatically had, since the mid-19th century, been speedily turned into international institutions: these included the international postal and telegraph service, the protection of patents, the arrangements for dealing with epidemics, the international river system and shipping rights on the Rhine, the Danube, the Scheldt, the Suez Canal, the Congo, and the Niger. In the year of the Congo Conference, that great expert on international law, Lorenz von Stein, "in the name of the constitutional unity of Europe" proposed in all seriousness that the major rail networks should be internationally neutralised both in peace and in war, since any interruption to international communications by hostilities between States was intolerable. The economic, technological, and administrative integration of Europe and, from the European point of view, of the whole world was as good as completed. Only "higher policy" remained outside the network, excluded even at the final sessions of the 1899–1907 Hague Conference, which created legal and humanitarian but no political institutions.

But of what concern was this to the ordinary citizen who went about his business and seldom spared a thought for the politicians?

PERHAPS THE Berlin Congo Conference, that first and last serious attempt to lay down the rules and share out the mandates in colonial politics, was the high point and also the turning point of this world order which had almost come into existence, unattractive though its principal physical offspring proved to be. For a moment there swam into view a constellation that seemed to link firmly within itself both a European and a global Balance of Power. Great Britain was the extra-continental power of Europe ("of Europe, not in Europe") and since the 18th century had played the part of critic, arbiter, and defender of the Balance there. She had done this egotistically, using reversals of alliances and intrigue, and her main purpose was to ensure that she herself never became directly involved in the continent and its affairs. Away from Europe, Britain in the 19th century was the guarantor of the European world order, of the rule of law, of freedom to trade and freedom to travel.

Britannia never ruled the world, nor even really ruled the waves. But she was the only omnipresent power acting as arbitrator or buffer all around the world, firmly based on two bastions from which to operate, her own homeland and, more important, her central base in the Indian Ocean, that "Mediterranean" between the Atlantic and the Pacific, from which she guarded the Balance of Power between the continents. And Britain saw to it that no European conflict was allowed to spread overseas, as such conflicts used to do in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Royal Navy played the part of an international maritime police force, and was even recognised as such since the Congress of Vienna in her war against piracy and the slave trade. In every continent the British flag meant that freedom to trade was there ensured for the nationals of any country, while British control of the narrows and the straits was a surety that any peaceful ship might pass through while engaged upon its lawful business. The British Empire itself, half an imperium and half a Commonwealth of free States, was the supporting framework of what an open world

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might eventually be like. Beneath its protecting hand the continental powers could outrival Britain herself in trade and foreign investment, and if pride or excess energy drove them they could create their own colonial empires, provided only that the British model and its communications network were not damaged thereby. The British policy of the Balance of Power was only one aspect of the underlying aims of this open, global Empire, which found itself in constant conflict with Russian and French imperialism, neither of which had the slightest interest in free trade.

From about the turn of the century Britain had to accept an uneasy partnership with the two new, non-European maritime imperialist powers, Japan and the United States. The existence of Britain's imperial might was one of history's unique, precarious, but fortunate accidents, and the rise or fall of Britain herself was dependent upon her maritime security. From this it followed logically that Britain's natural partner was Bismarck's Germany. Reservations and second thoughts might abound on both sides, but the real interests of both parties drew them together. Bismarck might, half reluctantly, agree to the planting of German colonists on the African coast, but for him a more congenial role was that of arbiter between the colonial powers. And for this he was eminently suited as the leader of a great continental power without vital overseas interests. Just so, for Britain, her role as arbiter between the continental powers was only one factor in her imperial policy.

For Bismarck the idea that Germany, squeezed in the centre of the continent between its neighbours and condemned by geography to hold the balance of the continent, might set sail from the mouth of the Elbe to challenge Britain upon the high seas would have seemed the product of a fevered imagination. For the last time those 19th-century statesmen, who really knew what the Balance of Power was all about, met in conference: and what it was all about was not so much self-restraint in the exercise of power as a true appreciation of how restrained power really was and thus how limited were the objectives obtainable by its exercise.

There is no evidence that either party was consciously aware of its relative role in this subdivision of support for the Balance of Power, nor that either regarded its own or the other's actions as more than moves upon the classic chessboard of power politics. But within twelve years even the rules of that game had been forgotten. The new Wilhelmian "world policy" was by then well launched, with the purpose of lifting the Balance of Power off its hinges throughout the world as well as in Europe; simultaneously the "naval race" with England was begun, strongpoints were built up in the Pacific right in the middle of the complicated field of tensions between America, Japan, Britain and Russia, and the Kaiser set himself up in the Middle East as the Protector of Islam. In fact all sense of direction was already lost. Nothing was now serious and everything dangerous. It was inevitable that the law of the Balance of Power should cause the rest of the world to draw closer together. "Reason: dog in the manger attitude and fear of our growing too great," the Kaiser noted.

THUS IN A Europe that had become almost inextricably intertwined, in an almost ordered world that had Europe for its centre, German political theory nourished on heroic legends and twilights of the gods set about destroying the infra-structure upon which it all relied. And there was nothing to stop them. The European Balance of Power, as the political scientists had rightly seen, was simply a confederation which had never created the political institutions essential to its own survival. Yet without such institutions it contained within itself a permanent danger of war. The collective diplomacy of the Concert of Europe had only come into play as, from crisis to crisis, the need for it arose, and through common agreement of all the great powers; as soon as one of them refused to play the game, the Concert itself had ceased to exist.

"When honour or vital interests are involved, one does not seek the opinions of others." When Kaiser Wilhelm II scribbled this in the margin of the British proposal that a conference be called, a century of collaboration between the nations received its death blow. Yet according to the statutes of the Hague Court he was fully entitled to behave in this way. The declarations of war followed, each one meticulously phrased according to the formulae of international law. And it was the uncontested right of any sovereign State to declare war whenever it wished.

The "power of facts" was thus pulverised by the facts of power. The functional integration of Europe, which had seemed as solid as bronze,

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burst like a soap bubble. World economy and world communications ceased on the day that war broke out, the frontiers were sealed, and enemy property sequestrated. The fundamental unity of European laws irrespective of frontiers vanished the day when the enemy was outlawed and "necessity knew no law" any more. The international technical organisations were put in cold storage, or were used to forward the letters written by prisoners of war. The international sea-ways became traps for enemy ships and hunting grounds for blockading navies and counter-blockading U-boats. And the great European railways were now mere branch lines along which troops were shunted to the front. It was the peace, not (as Norman Angell had written in 1910) the war, that turned out to be "the great illusion."

After four years not only were Europe's reserves exhausted, not only had the eastern half of the continent relapsed from war into civil war and tribal war, but all those preconditions upon which the European order and the Europacentric world had once rested were destroyed, forever. The period between the wars was one hopeless attempt to recreate a peaceful European order upon the narrow western fringe of Europe that was still more or less intact. But neither did this attempt lead to an order which could be recognised as rightful, nor could it be firmly established by force, and in its economic set-up it was living only from hand to mouth on American loans. Finally a quite ordinary crash on the New York stock exchange brought the rickety edifice of war debts, reparations, and credits crashing to the ground. The Great Slump marked the end of the post-war, and the beginning of the new pre-war period.

A chain reaction of violence began in 1914 which has meant that for us, now, the period before that date is as remote and indeed unimaginable as almost any other period in history. For what ended in 1914 was an epoch in which the ordinary citizen had no need to remember that it is political order or disorder, not economic integration or international technology, that will decide his fate. But always to know this only in retrospect is at best cold comfort.

In Longfellow's Library

Sappho
and the Venus de Milo
gaze out past
the scintillations from
the central
candelabrum
to where
(on an upper shelf)
plaster Goethe
in a laurel
crown, looks
down divided
from a group
dancing a
tarantella, by
the turquoise butterfly
that Agassiz
brought back
dead: below
these, the busts of
Homer, Aeschylus
and Sophocles still
pedestalled where
they ambushed Hiawatha.

Charles Tomlinson

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Albert Camus

A Writer's Notebook

THERE ARE many reasons for the official hostility [1942] towards England (good or bad, political or not). But one of the worst motives remains unspoken: the frenzy and base desire to see someone go under who dares resist a force that has crushed oneself.

THE WRITER is detestable who speaks of, and exploits, what he has never lived. But take care, a murderer is not the best person to speak about crime. (But is he not the best person to speak about *his* crime? Even that is not certain.) We must imagine a certain distance between creation and action. The true artist is halfway between his imaginings and his acts. It is he who is "capable of." He might be what he describes, live what he writes. The act by itself would limit him, he would be the man who has done something.

THE SECRET of my universe: Imagine God without human immortality.

THE COUNTRIES which harbour beauty are the most difficult to defend—one would like so much to spare them. So artistic peoples ought to be the chosen victims of sterile peoples—if the love of freedom did not take precedence over the love of beauty in men's hearts. This is an instinctive wisdom—freedom being the source of beauty.

THE MODERN INTELLIGENCE is in total confusion. Knowledge has swollen to such a degree that

THESE *extracts from the second volume of Albert Camus' notebooks run from January 1942 to March 1951, thus forming a continuation to the first series published in* ENCOUNTER (*October 1961*). *In these notes, however, Camus' preoccupations have changed. As he himself wrote, there are fewer pictures of Mediterranean landscapes than previously, fewer ecstatic celebrations of life and love. From 1940 onwards he was absorbing an experience which in the end led him to the conclusion that the men of his own generation "have lived and live more and more like dogs." The war forced him to concern himself with the world of the absurd, and these fragments show how such works such as* Le Mythe de Sisyphe *and* L'Étranger *owe to the immediate impact of the grotesque and pitiful incidents of everyday life in France under the German occupation. It was this shock which was to provide the imperative behind Camus' thought, which armed his determination not to save men, but to cure them—to use the words he put into the mouth of Dr. Rieux in* La Peste.

After the war Camus was faced with the necessity of taking up an attitude towards the ideological struggle that was dividing Europe as well as the French intellectual world. The appearance of the article "Ni victimes ni bourreaux" in November 1946 marked the assumption of a position, whose gradual emergence can be traced in Camus' notebooks. He would be a "witness for freedom" in face of those so obsessed with an abstract justice that they were ready to kill for it. Camus' choice separated him from old companions—from Merleau-Ponty and, eventually, from Sartre. But those who read the evidence will find in his political stance a readiness to look unpleasant facts in the face and a refusal to be bemused by ideological smokescreens. These notes, political or not, are imbued with the deep humanity which made of Camus so exemplary an upholder of civilised values, so honourable a representative of the conscience of modern man.

The translation is by Anthony Hartley.

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the world and the mind have lost any *point d'appui*. It is a fact that we are suffering from nihilism. But what is most amazing are the [Vichy] sermons on the "returns." Return to the middle ages, to the primitive mentality, to the land, to religion, to the armoury of old solutions. To grant these remedies a shadow of effectiveness one would have to behave as if our knowledge no longer existed—as if we had learned nothing—in a word pretend to wipe out what cannot be wiped out. We should have to erase with a stroke of the pen the contribution of several centuries and the undeniable gains of a mind which is finally (this is its latest progress) recreating chaos for its own ends. That is impossible. To be cured we must come to terms with this lucidity, this clear-sightedness. We must take into consideration the awareness of our exile which we have suddenly acquired. The intelligence is not in confusion because knowledge has turned the world upside down. It is in confusion because it cannot come to terms with this upheaval. It has not "got used to this idea." Let it once get used to it and the confusion will disappear. There will only remain the upheaval and the lucid knowledge that the mind has of it. There is a whole civilisation to be remade.

WHO CAN SAY: I have had eight perfect days. My memory tells me so, and I know that it does not lie. Yes, this image is perfect as those long days were perfect. Those joys were entirely physical, and they all had the mind's consent. There is perfection, harmony with one's lot, the recognition and respect of man.

Long dunes in their wildness and purity! Celebration of the morning water, so dark, so clear at noon and, at evening, warm and golden. Long mornings on the dunes and amid naked bodies, noon with its crushing weight, and one would have to repeat the whole succession, say again what has been said. There was youth. There is youth and, at the age of thirty, I wish for nothing other than to continue that youth. But....

"WHAT DO I ponder that is greater than myself and which I feel without being able to define it? A kind of difficult progress towards a holiness of negation—a heroism without God—in short, man in his purity. All the human virtues including solitude with regard to God.

What is it that makes the *exemplary* superiority (the only one) of Christianity? Christ and his saints—the search for a *style of life*. This work will number as many forms as there are stages on the road of an unrewarded perfection. *L'Étranger* is the zero point. *Id. Le Mythe. La Peste* is a progress, not from zero to infinity, but towards a deeper complexity that remains to be defined. The final point will be the saint, but he will have his arithmetical value —mensurable like man."

On Criticism

THREE YEARS to write a book, five lines to turn it into ridicule—and false quotations.

Letter to A.R., literary critic (intended not to be sent).

...A sentence of your criticism particularly struck me: "I disregard...." How can an enlightened critic, aware of the extent to which every work of art is planned, disregard the *only moment* in the painting of a character, when he speaks of himself and confides something of his secret to the reader? And how did you not realise that this ending was also a convergence, a privileged spot where the scattered being whom I described came together at last....

You attribute to me the ambition of writing realistically. Realism is a word void of meaning (*Madame Bovary* and *The Possessed* are realist novels, and they have nothing in common). I paid no attention to it. If I had to give a form to my ambition, I should speak on the contrary of a symbol. Moreover, you certainly felt this. But you give this symbol a meaning it does not have, and, in short, you have gratuitously attributed to me a ridiculous philosophy. Nothing in this book, indeed, can allow you to assert that I believe in natural man, that I identify a human being with a creature of the vegetable kingdom, that human nature is foreign to ethics, etc., etc. The book's principal character never takes the initiative. You failed to notice that he always confines himself to *answering questions*, those of life or those of men. Thus he never asserts anything. And I only gave a negative snapshot of him. Nothing gave you grounds on which to judge his basic attitude in advance, except that very final chapter. But you "disregard" it.

The reasons for this desire to say "the least possible" would be too long to give. But at least I may regret that a superficial examination has caused you to attribute to me a philosophy made to measure which I am not ready to take upon myself. You will be more sensible to what

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I am putting forward if I state precisely that the only quotation in your article is inaccurate (give it and correct it) and that thus it serves as a basis for unjustified deductions. Perhaps there was another philosophy and you have touched on it when commenting on the word "inhumanity." But what is the point of proving it?

Perhaps you will think that this is a lot of fuss for a little book by an unknown writer. But I believe that this affair is more important than myself. For you have placed yourself at a moral standpoint which prevented you from judging with your acknowledged clearsightedness and talent. This position is indefensible, and you know it better than anyone. There is no clear boundary between your criticisms and those that may soon be made (that were made not so long ago) under a controlled literature on the moral character of such and such a work. Without anger I tell you that this is hateful. Neither you nor anyone else has the capacity to judge if a work can be of service or harmful to the nation at this or any time. In any case I refuse to submit to this kind of jurisdiction, and that is the reason for my letter. I should be grateful to you if you would believe that, in fact, I should have accepted with serenity more serious criticisms formulated in a less dogmatic spirit.

In any case I do not wish this letter to give rise to a new misunderstanding. I am not approaching you as a discontented author. I ask you not to publish anything in this letter. You have not often seen my name in present-day reviews which it is nonetheless easy to enter. This is because, having nothing to say there, I do not like making sacrifices to publicity. At present I am publishing books which have taken me years of work for the simple reason that they are finished and that I am preparing those which follow them. I expect neither material advantage nor esteem from them. I only hoped that they would obtain for me the attention and patience granted to any undertaking of good faith. I must believe that even this demand was inordinate. Pray believe, however, Monsieur, in my sincere feelings of respect....

FOR MANY YEARS an essay on France will not be able to do without a reference to the present period. This idea came in a small local train[1] while seeing pass, massed on tiny stations, those French faces and silhouettes that it will be difficult for me to forget: old peasant couples, she with a skin like parchment, he with a smooth face lighted by two bright eyes and a white moustache—silhouettes twisted by two winters of privation, dressed in shiny, darned clothes. Elegance has left this people among whom poverty dwells. In the trains the suitcases are tired, closed with string, patched up with cardboard. All the French have the air of emigrants.

Id. in the industrial towns—that old workman seen at his window wearing spectacles and profiting by the last light of day to read with his book prudently laid flat between his outstretched hands.

At the station, a busy crowd absorbs horrible food without boggling and then goes out into the dark town; they elbow one another without mingling and go back to hotels, rooms, etc. A desperate, mute life that the whole of France bears expectantly.

Towards the 10th, 11th, and 12th of the month everybody smokes. By the 18th impossible to get a light in the street. In the trains they speak of the drought. It is less spectacular here than in Algeria, but nonetheless tragic. An old workman tells of his misery: his two rooms one hour from Saint-Étienne. Two hours on the road, eight hours' work—nothing to eat at home—too poor to use the black market. A young wife does hours of washing because she has two children and her husband has returned from the war with a stomach ulcer. "He should have well-grilled white meat. Where can you find that? They have given him a certificate for a diet. Then they give him three-quarters of a litre of milk, but they take away the fats. Who has ever seen a man fed with milk?" Sometimes her customers' linen is stolen; she has to pay for it.

During this time the rain drowns the dirty landscape of an industrial valley—the bitter scent of this poverty—the dreadful distress of these lives. And the others make speeches.

Saint-Étienne in the morning in the mist with the sirens calling to work in the midst of a jumble of towers, buildings, and great chimneys carrying at their top towards a darkened sky their deposit of cinders like a monstrous sacrificial cake.

HOW IS IT that, connected with so much suffering, her face yet remains for me the face of happiness.

[1] Camus went every week from Le Chambon-sur-Lignon to Saint-Étienne to receive medical treatment.

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"Sometimes, after all those days ordered by the will alone, in which arose hour by hour this work permitting neither absence of mind nor weakness, wishing to neglect feeling and the world, ah! what abandonment possessed me, with what relief I threw myself into the heart of this distress that had accompanied me during all these days. What a desire, what a temptation no longer to be anything that has to be constructed and to leave this work and that face that I had to mould with such difficulty. I loved, I regretted, I desired, in short I was a man....

...the empty sky of summer, the sea that I have loved so much and those lips offered...."

Sexual life was given to man, perhaps, to turn him aside from his true path. It is his opium. In it everything goes to sleep. Outside it things take on life again. At the same time chastity puts an end to the species which is, perhaps, the truth.

Sexuality leads to nothing. It is not immoral, but it is unproductive. One can give oneself to it for a time when one does not wish to produce. But chastity alone is connected with personal progress.

There is a time when sexuality is a victory—when it is released from moral imperatives. But it quickly becomes a defeat afterwards—and the only victory is won over it in its turn: that is chastity.

November 11th. Like rats![2]

In the morning everything is covered with frost, the sky shines behind the festoons and pennons of an immaculate fair. At ten o'clock as the sun begins to give out warmth the whole countryside is filled with the crystal music of an airy thaw: little cracklings like the sighing of a tree, the fall of frost on the earth like the noise of white insects thrown one upon the other, lingering leaves falling uninterruptedly beneath the weight of the ice and hardly rebounding on the ground like intangible remains. All around, the valleys and hills vanish in smoke. When one watches it for some time, one sees that this landscape, by losing all its colours, has suddenly grown old. It is a very old country swimming up to us in a single morning through thousands of years.... This spur covered with trees and ferns juts like a prow at the junction of two rivers. Cleared of frost by the first sunbeams, it remains the only living thing in the midst of this landscape white as eternity. At this point at least the mingled voices of the two mountain streams are allied against the limitless silence that surrounds them. But, little by little, the waters' song is itself embodied in the landscape. Without diminishing by a note it yet becomes silence. And at intervals the passage of three smoke-coloured rooks is necessary to give signs of life once again to the sky.

Seated at the highest point of the prow, I continue this motionless navigation in the land of indifference. Not less than the whole of nature and this white peace that winter brings to over-heated hearts—to appease this heart devoured by a bitter love. I watch, broadening in the sky, that swelling of light that denies death's portents. At last a sign of the future, above me to whom everything now speaks of the past. Be quiet, lung! Cram yourself with this pale, icy air that is your food. Create silence. Let me no longer be forced to listen to your slow decay—and let me at last turn towards....

In the nights of Algeria the howling of dogs reverberates from spaces ten times greater than those of Europe. Thus it is adorned with a nostalgia unknown in these narrow countries. It is a language which to-day I alone hear in my memory.

Because the sky is blue, the trees covered with snow, shooting their white branches, beside the stream, very low over the frozen water, have the air of almond-trees in flower. For the eyes there is a continual confusion between spring and winter in this country.

I have had an illicit love-affair with this country, that is to say, I have reasons to love it and reasons to hate it. For Algeria, on the contrary, it is unbridled passion and abandonment to the pleasure of love. Question: Can one love a country like a woman?

Essay on Revolt. After having caused philosophy to start from anguish: make it emerge from happiness.

Id. To regenerate love in the world of the absurd is in fact to regenerate the most burning and the most perishable of human feelings (Plato: "If we were gods, we should not know love"). But there is no value judgment to make on enduring love (on this earth) or on that which

[2] The Allied landing in North Africa cuts Camus off from his home and family.

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does not endure. A faithful love—*if it does not impoverish*—is one way for man to maintain the best of himself to the greatest possible degree. It is thus that fidelity is re-established as a value. But this love is outside the eternal. It is the most human of feelings with all the word includes both of restriction and rapture. That is why man only realises himself in love because in it he finds in a dazzling form the image of his futureless destiny (and not, as idealists say, because it approaches a certain form of the eternal). The type: Heathcliff. All this illustration of the fact that absurdity has its formula in the opposition between *that which endures* and *that which does not*. It being understood that there is only one way of enduring which is to endure eternally and that there is no middle term. We are of the world that does not endure. And everything that does not endure—and nothing except what does not endure—is ours. Thus it is a question of recovering love from eternity or, at least, from those who disguise it as an image of eternity. I see the objection already: the fact is that you have never loved. Let us leave that.

FEBRUARY 10TH: Four months of ascetic, solitary life. The will, the mind gain from it. But the heart?

WHAT CAN A MAN better desire than poverty? I have not said misery nor the hopeless toil of the modern proletarian. But I do not see what more can be desired than poverty linked with an active leisure.

DEATH GIVES its form to love as it gives it to life—by transforming it into destiny. She whom you loved died during the time you loved her, and behold a love henceforward fixed forever—which, without this end, would have disintegrated. So what would the world be without death, a succession of forms vanishing and reborn, an anguished flight, a world never completed? But fortunately here he is, death, the bringer of stability. And the lover weeping over the beloved corpse, René before Pauline, sheds tears of pure joy—of total consummation—of man recognising that at last his destiny has taken on a form.

JUNE, LUXEMBOURG: A Sunday morning full of wind and sun. Around the great pool the wind scatters the waters of the fountain, the tiny sailing boats on the wrinkled water and the swallows around the tall trees. Two young men arguing: "You who believe in human dignity...."

THOSE WHO love the truth must seek love in marriage, that is, love without illusions.

SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1943: He who despairs of events is a coward, but he who puts his hope in the human condition is a madman.

IN A PERIOD of revolution it is the best who die. The law of sacrifice brings it about that finally it is always the cowardly and prudent who have the chance to speak since the others have lost it by giving the best of themselves. Speaking always implies a treason.

PARAIN.[8] They have all cheated. They have never gone beyond the despair in which they found themselves. And that because of literature. A Communist for him is someone who has renounced language and replaced it by *actual revolt*. He has chosen to do what Christ scorned to do: save the damned—by damning himself.

THE GREATEST SAVING that can be made in the order of thought is to accept the non-intelligibility of the world—and concern oneself with man.

"DEFEND yourself," said the judges.
"No," says the Accused.
"Why? It is always done."
"No, again. I want you to take all your responsibility."

PLAGUE. One cannot enjoy the cry of birds in the coolness of the evening—the world such as it is. For now it is covered by a thick layer of history which its language must penetrate to reach us. It is deformed by it. Nothing in it is felt for itself because to the world's every moment is joined a whole series of images of death or despair. There are no more mornings without agonies, no more evenings without prisons, and no more noons without fearful slaughter.

I HAVE TAKEN ten years to conquer what seems to me priceless: a heart without bitterness. And as often happens, once bitterness was left behind, I preserved it in one or two books. So I

[8] Brice Parain, a well-known French philosopher.

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shall always be judged on this bitterness that no longer means anything to me. But that is just. It is the price that has to be paid.

Novel on Justice. A rebel who carries out an action which he knows will cause innocent hostages to be killed.... Then he agrees to sign the pardon of a writer whom he despises.

We French are now at the point of every civilisation: we no longer know how to kill.

It is we who bear witness against God.

Political antinomies. We are in a world [1945] where we have to choose to be a victim or executioner—and nothing else. This choice is not easy. It has always seemed to me that in fact there were no executioners, but only victims. When the account is summed up, naturally. But it is a truth which is not widespread.

I have the liveliest taste for freedom. And for every intellectual, freedom ends by being identified with freedom of expression. But I quite realise that this concern does not come first with a great number of Europeans because justice alone can give them the material minimum they need and that, rightly or wrongly, they would willingly sacrifice freedom to this elementary justice.

I have known this for a long time. If it seemed to me necessary to defend the conciliation of justice and freedom, it is because, in my opinion, in this resided the last hope of the West. But this conciliation can only be accomplished in a certain climate which to-day appears to me almost utopian. Shall we have to sacrifice one or other of these values? What are we to think in that case?

Politics (*continued*). Everything stems from the fact that those whose business it is to speak for the people have not, have never really cared for freedom. When they are sincere they even boast of the contrary. But simply to care would be sufficient....

Those, therefore, and they are rare, who live with this scruple must perish one day or another (in this respect there are several ways of dying). If they are proud, they will not do so without a struggle. But how could they struggle against their brothers and the whole of justice? They will bear witness, that is all. And, after an interval of two thousand years, we shall watch Socrates' sacrifice repeated time and again. Programme for to-morrow: the solemn and meaningful execution of the witnesses for freedom.

Tragedy. *C.* and *L.*—"I come towards you for the emergency. I am sending you therefore into mortal danger."

"They are both right," cries a character.

C.—"I am sending you to almost certain death. But I demand that you should understand me"

"I cannot understand what is inhuman."

"Then I shall renounce that too—to be understood by those I love."

C.—"I do not believe in freedom. That is my part of man's suffering. Freedom to-day is in my way."

L.—"Why?"

"It prevents me from establishing justice."

"It is my conviction that they can be reconciled."

"History shows that your conviction is wrong. I believe that they are not to be reconciled. That is my part of man's wisdom."

"Why choose the one rather than the other?"

"Because I want the greatest possible number of men to be happy. And because freedom is only ever the concern, the great concern of the few."

"And if your justice fails?"

"Then I shall enter into a hell that, even to-day, you cannot imagine."

"I am going to tell you what will happen" (picture).

"Every man wagers on what he believes to be the truth.... Once again freedom is in my way —We must suppress the witnesses for freedom."

C.—"*L.*, Your respect?"

L.—"What can that mean to you?"

C.—"You are right, it is a weakness that has no meaning."

L.—"Yet it is this which makes me continue to respect you. Farewell. *C.*—Men like me always have the air of dying alone. That is what I am going to do. But truly I would have done what is necessary that men might not be alone."

L.—"To re-make the world is an insignificant task."

C.—"It is not the world that is to be re-made but man."

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C.—"There are idiots everywhere. But everywhere else there are idiots and cowards. You will not find a single coward among us."

L.—"Heroism is a secondary virtue."

C.—"You have the right to say so, since you have proved yourself. But what, then, is the first virtue?"

L. (looking at him): "Friendship."

"If the world is tragic, if we live in laceration, it is not so much because of the tyrants. You and I know that there is a freedom, a justice, a joy deeply shared, in short a community in the struggle against tyrants. When evil reigns there is no problem. When the opponent is wrong, those who fight him are free and at peace. But laceration comes because men who equally desire the good of man desire it at once or fix it three generations off, and because that is sufficient to separate them forever. When opponents are equally right, then we enter into tragedy. And at the end of tragedy you know what there is?"

C.—"Yes, there is death."

L.—"Yes, there is death. And yet I shall never agree to kill you."

C.—"I would agree if it were necessary. That is my ethic. And it is the sign for me that you do not possess the truth."

L.—"It is the sign for me that you do not possess the truth."

C.—"I seem to triumph because I am alive. But I am in the same night as you, having my man's will for sole help."

End. They bring back *L's* body. A partisan treats it with disrespect. Silence. *C.*—"He has died as a hero for the cause that was ours. We have to respect him and avenge him."[4]

C.—"Look.... Look at this night. It is vast. It revolves its mute stars above the terrible battles of humanity. For thousands of years you have worshipped this sky, which yet remained obstinately silent, you accepted that your poor loves, your desires and your fears should be nothing beside the divinity. You believed in your solitude. And to-day when the same sacrifice is demanded of you, but this time to serve man, are you going to refuse it?"

C.—"Do not think me a completely blind soul."

L. returns wounded.

C.—"You should have got through all the same."

L.—"It was not possible."

C.—"Since you could return, you could get through."

L.—"It was not possible."

C.—"Why?"

L.—"Because I am going to die."

X.—"It is not for you to go."

C.—"I am the leader here, and it is I who decide."

X.—"Exactly, we need you. We are not there to make fine gestures, but to be effective. A good leader is the condition of effectiveness."

C.—"Very well, *X.* But I do not much like truths that turn to my advantage. So I will go."

THE WOMAN—"But then who is right?"

THE LIEUTENANT—"He who survives."

A man enters.

"He is dead too."

"Ah! no, no! And I know perfectly well who was right. It was he, yes, he who asked for the meeting."

I AM NOT MADE for politics since I am incapable of desiring or accepting an opponent's death.

I AM ABLE TO CREATE by a continual effort. My tendency is to roll to a stop. My deepest, surest inclination is silence and the daily gesture. Years of obstinacy have been necessary for me to escape from amusement, from the fascination of the mechanical. But I know that I keep upright by this very effort and that, if I ceased believing in it for a single moment, I should roll over the precipice. Like this I keep myself out of sickness and renunciation, holding up my head with all my strength to breathe and to conquer. This is my manner of despair and my manner of curing it.

AGAINST committed literature. Man is not *only* social. His death at least belongs to him. We are made to live with others. But one only really dies for oneself.

TRAGEDY. *C.L. C.*—"I am right and that is what gives me the right to kill him. I cannot stop at this detail. I think according to the world and history."

[4] The last words are simply probable. The manuscript is difficult to read here.

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L.—"When the detail is a human life, for me it is the whole world and the whole of history."

Conversations with Koestler. The end only justifies the means if the proportion of reciprocal size is reasonable, *e.g.*: I can send Saint-Exupéry on a fatal mission to save a regiment. But I cannot deport millions of people and suppress all freedom for an equivalent quantitative result and calculate on the basis of three or four generations sacrificed beforehand.

—Genius. There is none.

—It is when he is recognised as having talent that the creator's greatest wretchedness begins (I no longer have the courage to publish my books).

October 29th. Koestler—Sartre—Malraux—Sperber, and I. Between Piero della Francesca and Dubuffet.

K.—Necessity of defining a minimum political ethic. Therefore first to get rid of a certain number of false scruples ("fallacies," he says): (*a*) that what one says can help causes that one cannot help; (*b*) examination of conscience. The category of injustices. "Myself, when the interviewer asked me if I hated Russia, there was something which came to a stop there within me. And I made an effort. I said that I hated the Stalinist régime as much as I hated the Hitlerian and for the same reasons. But there was something dislocated there." "So many years of struggle. I lied for them . . . and now like that chum who beat his head against the walls of my room and said with his face full of blood turned towards me: 'There is no more hope, there is no more hope.' . . ." —Means of action, etc.

M.—Momentary impossibility of reaching the proletariat. Is the proletariat the highest historical value?

C.—Utopia. A utopia to-day will cost them less than a war. The opposite of utopia is war. On the one hand. And on the other: "Do you not think that we are all responsible for the absence of values? And that if all of us who come from Nietzscheanism, from nihilism, or historical realism, said publicly that we were mistaken and that there are moral values and that from now on we will do what is necessary to keep them and elucidate them, do you not think it would be the beginning of a hope?"

S.—"I cannot turn my moral values solely against the U.S.S.R. For it is true that the deportation of several millions of men is more serious than the lynching of a Negro. But the lynching of a Negro is the result of a situation that has lasted for a hundred years and more and which represents finally the unhappiness of as many million Negroes throughout time as there are millions of Cherkesses deported."

K.—It must be said that as writers we commit treason before history if we do not denounce what there is to denounce. The conspiracy of silence is our condemnation in the eyes of those who will follow us.

S.—Yes. Etc., etc.

And during all this time the impossibility of defining how much fear or truth there is in what each says.

Met Tar. coming out of the statement on the dialogue. He has an air of reserve and yet the same friendly glance as he had when I caused him to enter *Combat*'s group.

"You are a Marxist now?"

"Yes."

"You will be a murderer then."

"I have already been one."

"Me too. But I no longer want to."

"And you were my sponsor."

It was true.

"Listen, Tar. . . . Here is the real problem: whatever happens, I shall always defend you against the firing-squad. You will be obliged to approve my being shot. Think about that."

"I will think about it."

In proportion as human works have ended by covering, little by little, the vast spaces of the sleeping world, to such an extent that the very idea of virgin nature to-day has some of the characteristics of the myth of Eden (there are no more islands), peopling the deserts, dividing up the beaches and raking even the sky with the long strokes of aeroplanes, leaving nothing untouched except precisely those areas where man cannot live, in the same way and at the same time (and because of) the feeling for history has covered, little by little, the feeling for nature in the hearts of men, taking away from the creator everything that up till now was his due in order to give it back to the creature, and all that with so powerful and irresistible a movement that one can imagine the day when the silent natural creation will be completely replaced by the human creation, hideous and dazzling, resounding with the clamour of revolution and war, humming with factories and trains, at last definitive and

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triumphant in the course of history—having completed its task on this earth which was perhaps to show that everything imposing and bewildering produced by it during thousands of years was not worth the fleeting perfume of the wild rose, the valley of olive-trees, the favourite dog.

AT THE END of a week's loneliness again a sharp feeling of my inadequacy for the work which I began with the wildest of ambitions. Temptation to give it up. This long debate with a truth stronger than myself required a barer heart, a greater and stronger intelligence. But what is there to be done? I should die without it.

NOVEL. TWINKLE—"When I arrived I was exhausted with foreboding and fever. I went to look at the notices to know at what time she alighted if by chance she were not already there. It was eleven o'clock in the evening. The last train from the west would arrive at two. I was the last to emerge. She was waiting for me at the exit, alone in the midst of two or three people, with an Alsatian that she had collected. She came forward towards me. I kissed her clumsily, but I was glad from the bottom of my heart. We left the station. The sky of Provence was shining with stars above the ramparts. She had been there since five o'clock in the afternoon. She had already come to wait for the seven o'clock train, and I was not on it. She was afraid that I would not arrive, for she had given my name at the hotel, and her papers did not correspond. They had refused to register her, and she did not dare to go back there. When we arrived at the ramparts she threw herself against me, in the middle of the crowd passing by and turning round to look, and clasped me in a rapture in which there was relief and not love, but the hope of love. For myself I felt my fever upon me and would have wished to be strong and handsome. At the hotel I put things right, and everything went well, But I wanted to drink a glass of cognac before going back to the rooms. And there in the well-heated bar where she made me drink without stopping, I felt my confidence return and the tide of abandonment fill me completely."

SUSPICION of formal virtue—that is the explanation of this world. Those who have felt this suspicion about themselves and widened it to all others have drawn from it a ceaseless sensitivity to any declared virtue. From this to suspecting *actual* virtue is only a step. Therefore they have chosen to call virtue what helps the coming of the society they desire. The ultimate motive (that suspicion) is noble. Is the logic good?—that is the question.

I, too, have an account to settle with this idea. Everything I have ever thought or written relates to this suspicion (it is the subject of *L'Étranger*). As soon as I do not accept the pure and simple negation (nihilism or historical materialism) of the "virtuous consciousness," as Hegel calls it, I have a middle term to find. Is it possible, legitimate, to be within history while referring to values that go beyond history? Does not the value of ignorance itself cover a convenient shelter? Nothing is pure, nothing is pure—there is the cry that has infected this century.

The temptation of going along with those who deny and act! There are some who return to falsehood as one enters into orders. And with the same admirable impulse, that is certain. But what is an impulse? By what, whom, why are we to judge?

If this is really the march of history, if there is no liberation but only unification, am I not among those who put a brake on history? No liberation without unification, they say—and, if that is true, then we are lagging behind. But to be in the van, we have to prefer a hypothesis which is scarcely probable, which has already encountered terrifying *historical* contradictions, to the realities of unhappiness, murder, and exile for two or three generations. The choice therefore turns on a hypothesis. It is not proved that liberation first requires unification. Nor is it proved that it can do without it. But it is not inevitable that unification must come about through violence—Generally, violence brings laceration beneath appearances of unity. It is probable that unification and liberation are necessary, possible that this unification has a chance of coming about through *knowledge* and preaching. Then the word would be an act. At least one would have to devote oneself totally to that task.

Ah, these are the hours of doubt. And who can bear a whole world's doubt by himself?

MERLEAU-PONTY.[5] Learn to read. He complains of having been misread—and misunderstood. It

[5] He had just published *Humanisme et Terreur*. The break between Merleau-Ponty and Camus followed this publication. (*Cf.* Sartre's *Merleau-Ponty Vivant*, p. 313.)

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is the type of complaint to which I would have been predisposed formerly. Now I know that it is unjustified. There is no misinterpretation.

Rakes who are virtuous in their principles. True. But in practice and for the time being I prefer a profligate who kills nobody to a puritan who kills everybody. And, above all, what I have never been able to stomach is a profligate who wants to kill everybody.

M.-P. or the type of contemporary man: the one who counts the strokes. He explains that no one is ever right and that it is not so simple (I hope that it is not for my benefit that he gives himself the trouble of proving this). But a little further on he exclaims that Hitler is a criminal against whom any resistance will always be right. If nobody is right, then we must not judge. The fact is that we must be against Hitler *to-day*. We have counted the strokes, and we continue.

SARTRE or the nostalgia of the universal idyll.

No ONE was as sure as I was of conquering the world by straight ways. And now.... Where was the fault then? What weakened all at once and brought about the rest...?

R.C. In a train under the occupation, dawn breaks. The Germans. A woman drops a gold coin. *C.* covers it with his foot and gives it back to her. The woman: "Thank you." She offers a cigarette. He accepts. She offers them to the Germans. *R.C.:* "On consideration, Madame, here is your cigarette back." A German looks at him. Tunnel. A hand presses his. "I am a Pole." On emerging from the tunnel, *R.C.* looks at the German. His eyes are full of tears. At the station the German going out turns towards him and winks. *C.* answers and smiles. "Swine," says a Frenchman, coming upon them during the scene.

A LITTLE BAY before Tenès, at the foot of chains of mountains. A perfect semi-circle. In the falling evening a plenitude fraught with anguish hovers over the silent waters. One understands then that, if the Greeks have created the idea of despair and tragedy, it is always *through* beauty and its oppressive side. It is a culminating tragedy. Instead of which the modern mind has created its despair from ugliness and mediocrity.

Doubtless what Char means. For the Greeks beauty is at the start. For a European it is an end scarcely ever reached. I am not modern.

MY LIFE'S good fortune has been that I have only met, loved (and disappointed) exceptional beings. I have known dignity, natural ease, nobility in *others*. Admirable—and painful—sight.

"AH! I would certainly kill myself if I did not know that death itself is not a rest and that fearful anguish also awaits us in the grave."

CHAR. Calm block fallen here on earth from some hidden disaster.

PORTRAITS. Beneath the little veil she watches with both her fine eyes. A calm beauty, a little in the milkmaid style. Suddenly she speaks and her mouth is contorted into a parallelogram. She is ugly. A society woman.

RECRUITMENT. The greater part of failed men of letters go to Communism. It is the only position that allows them to judge artists condescendingly. From this point of view it is the party of thwarted vocations. A large recruitment, one guesses.

PREFACE book of political essays. From this point of view the last essay expresses well enough what I think, that is that modern man is forced to concern himself with politics. I concern myself with it reluctantly and because, more through my defects than my qualities, I have never been able to refuse any part of the duties that I encountered.

KLEIST burning his manuscripts twice.... Piero della Francesca blind at the end of his days.... Ibsen finally losing his memory and relearning the alphabet.... Courage! Courage!

BEAUTY, which helps us to live, also helps us to die.

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS the world was like those Italian paintings of the Renaissance where, on the cold flagstones, men are tortured while others look elsewhere with the most complete lack of concern. The number of the "disinterested" made one dizzy besides that of those who were concerned. What characterised history was the quantity of people who were not interested in the misfortune of others. Sometimes the disinterested had their turn. But then it was in the midst of

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general lack of concern, and the one compensated for the other. Today everybody makes a show of being interested. In the halls of the palace the witnesses suddenly turn towards the scourged man.

THE mistral has scraped the sky down to a new skin, blue and shining as the sea. From all sides the songs of birds explode with a strength, a glee, a joyful dissonance, an infinite rapture. The day drips and glitters.

NOT ethics but fulfilment. And there is no other fulfilment than that of love, that is of renunciation of oneself and death to the world. Go right to the end. *Disappear*. Be dissolved in love. Then it will be the strength of love and no longer myself that will create. To be engulfed. To be dismembered. To be annihilated in fulfilment and the passion for truth.

WAIT, wait until the days whose lighted garland is still before me go out one by one. Finally the last one goes out and it is total darkness.

PARIS starts by helping a writer's work, and brings it into prominence. But once it is established, then the pleasure begins. It is a question of destroying it. Thus there are in Paris as in certain rivers in Brazil thousands of little fishes whose task it is. They are minute, but innumerable. Their whole head, so to say, resides in their teeth. And they strip the flesh off a man completely in less than five minutes, only leaving the white of the bones. Then they go away, sleep a little, and begin again.

DISHONESTY of the artist when he pretends to believe in the democracy of principles. For then he denies the deepest part of his experience which is the great lesson of art: hierarchy and order. That this dishonesty is sentimental does not detract from it. It leads to the slavery of factories or camps.

IF I had to die unknown to the world, in the depth of a cold prison, the sea at the last moment would fill my cell, come to raise me above myself and help me to die without hatred.

MARCH 7th, 1951: Finished the first draft of *L'Homme Révolté*. With this book the two first cycles are completed. Thirty-seven years. And now, can creation be free?

EVERY fulfilment is slavery. It compels us to a higher fulfilment.

Song

What do you
want, love. To be
loved. What,

what wanted,
love, wanted
so much as love

like nothing
considered, no
feeling but

a simple
recognition
forgotten, sits

in its feeling,
two things,
one and one.

Robert Creeley

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Horace Walpole's Career

By Louis Kronenberger

OSCAR WILDE said of the English aristocracy that it was the very best thing the English had done in the way of fiction. Certainly it has given us not only many characters that the most enterprising novelist would have been delighted to invent, but many besides that no self-respecting novelist would have dared to. Consider that highborn Victorian lady who woke one night to feel hands moving back and forth, back and forth, over her bed. Too terrified to scream, she held her breath; the motions ceased at last and, too terrified to move, she finally fell asleep. When she woke in broad daylight, she discovered that her butler had been walking in his sleep and had laid the table for eight on her bed. Could even Dickens have imagined that? Yet people like that dart, again and again, in and out of Horace Walpole's letters; are at times, indeed, the very stuff of it.

But the English aristocracy is more than a field for anecdote, as equally the letters of Horace Walpole are more than a fund of it. During the eighteenth century the aristocracy not only ruled Great Britain; it forged, if it sometimes fettered, taste; it commanded a style; it perfected an attitude; it established a way of life. Despite Wilde, it was not fiction but fact: a great fact: a great force; and in its composure, its scepticism, its arrogant freedoms, its tyrannical forms, it was a supreme embodiment of worldliness. In Horace Walpole it found not at all a simple mirror: were he only that, however great he might be as a worldling turned social historian, he would have no place in literature. That he has, we know, a very marked place, that his letters have a persisting allure, comes from his possessing no less distinctive a temperament than an eye; from, also, a certain ambivalence of approach in him, which must mock at what most delights it, and be dismissive of what it succumbs to.

If you are the son of a prime minister, you can become many things yourself. If, indeed, you share some of your father's genius, like the younger Pitt, you can become prime minister yourself. If, on the other hand, you are as finicking as your father was bluff, as waspishly well-bred as your father was carelessly open-handed, you will use your place in the world to observe rather than participate. You will much less want to make news than be always the first to report it. Horace Walpole had the *entrée*; he had, very early, a well-trained eye; and very early, in Horace Mann at Florence and in a number of other correspondents, he had an attentive audience. Had all his other correspondents perished, Horace Mann alone would have given Walpole a posterity. But most of the other correspondents lived rather extended lives, while Walpole himself lived on until eighty—so that he presents us with a just sufficiently altering England under a number of rulers and régimes, and at the same time a just appreciably altering Walpole.

IN SOME WAYS, he does not alter at all. A conscious artist, he remains detached in much that he observes, but he is obsessed with observing. Again, he makes light of things, but he never makes light of the business of making light of things. He is probably the greatest artist in gossip in England literature, yet that does not really characterise him or constitute a wholly sound unit of measurement. It would be like calling Pope no more than an artist in abuse. Walpole in his letters has a real place, a real value, from constituting the voice of his age and class, and yet having a very particular accent of his own. To us he seems, as he essentially was, a notable member of the *ancien régime*; yet in his own time there was something fashionably *avant-garde* about him too, something of the innovator, who invented his own fopperies, who transplanted his own fiction from the medieval, who translated his own pleasures from the French. In a dilettante way he constantly adds something to what he embodies; as ultimately, in his dilettante way, he subtracts

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something. Walpole's own social world, we can feel pretty sure, treated him as a kind of pet eccentric, regarded him as a kind of privileged sniffer, and consulted him with a certain faintly contemptuous deference.

THERE WAS MUCH to consult him about. He had the eighteenth-century patrician's horror of being a professional, yet could say with much truth, in his amateur fashion, that "no profession comes amiss to me—from tribune of the people to a habit-maker." We, after two centuries, remember him as a printer, an adventurous house-builder, an M.P., an antiquary, a historian, a novelist, a playwright, and above all a letter-writer; and in his own age he must have seemed one of the very greatest of collectors —if of *bons mots* pre-eminently, yet of *objets d'art* as well. And for such a role in life it was important that he have a retinue of intelligencers, of eavesdroppers, of drawing-room spies. It was not enough that the supreme social chronicler of his age should be able to go everywhere or meet every one; he had to have, as it were, a deputy in a corner of every room, at each end of every dinner table. In his own high-styled way he ran a kind of factory of anecdote and gossip and news, with duchesses doing piecework and cabinet ministers tying up parcels and ambassadors acting as delivery boys. But it was all hand-made, as durably elegant as Sheraton sideboards or Lamerie silver: it was not just transferred and recorded, it was transformed by Walpole, in the end, into great letter-writing.

Far from being an accidental virtue, the letter-writing was a premeditated, an almost predestined medium. Though aimed at posterity, it remained in its own time private, offered to a suitably appreciative few. With the secrets of society never peddled to the outside world, there was no need, for the most part, to dot *i*'s. And in all this the point of view has acted as a preservative. The immense amount of mere information which Walpole's letters provide would make them an indispensable source book, but no more than that. The cultivated reader does not, however, take up the letters for mere information; having taken them up for pleasure, he puts them down having been often very pungently informed; but always as much held by style as by substance, and by a strong imprint of personality. A distinctive eighteenth-century merit is how well it mingles a form of tradition and the individual talent; how one eighteenth-century master of language after another both evokes his era and leaves his own signature:

Proud to catch cold at a Venetian door

—that must surely be Pope;

Solitude is dangerous to reason without being favourable to virtue

—that can only be Johnson. And so with Walpole:

The first step toward being in fashion is to lose an eye or a tooth. . . . Not that I complain: it is charming to totter into vogue.

"Totter into vogue": Walpole's gift for phrase, beyond what it conveys of personality, lies in what it imparts of place, in its sense of *town*. Rather than *rus in urbe*, Walpole represents *urbs in rure*; he represents artifice in Nature, elegance in *déshabillé*, the hedge that is both ornament and impassable boundary. He stands, very often, for the greenhouse, the bandbox, Marie Antoinette's dairy. He has some of the quality of the best society verse, with its neat *touchés*, its cool diminutive glitter. The universe, with Walpole, suddenly turns into a ballroom, the Trojan War into a hair-pulling match. This small, myopic purview is one way —perhaps the only way—to see things steadily and see them whole; for, among other things, it sees them framed. Being a century of consolidation, of putting man's house in order after all the discoveries and upheavals of the century before, the eighteenth century in England, by narrowing its horizons, by slowing down its pace, could just enclose life into something manageable and precise. But, if all this is myopic, it is not really blinkered. If it is miniature and toylike, it is not entirely frivolous. At least it enables us to see a *way* of life steadily, with its great orderly host of details. Walpole, moreover, is in one sense as thorough and concrete a realist—and a materialist—as Defoe is in another. Again, because Walpole fights all the century's wars with tin soldiers, or fills England's parliaments and administrations with puppets, is not to say that he is a bad critic of them, or even a bad reporter. His mock-heroic approach must be allowed for, but constitutes an offset to the all-too-heroic approach; and, under the aspect of eternity, may well come closer to the truth. Curiously enough, Horace Walpole's father became, with just as disenchanted and worldly a view of things, the greatest and most useful of English administrators. Sir Robert's administrations were decidedly made up of—or turned into—puppets; and tin solidiers or real ones, he would fight no wars at all. There may be a certain irony in the fact that Sir Robert was as excessively philistine as Horace could be over-exquisite, but there is no real contradiction. Common-sense governed the father's life as its blood-brother, worldliness, governed the son's. And in both men, in the one by way of experience, in the other of temperament, a certain cynicism predominated.

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TAKE FROM Horace Walpole what makes him an incomparable storehouse of gathered fact and a superb writer of letters, and he emerges a recurrent type of all cultivated societies, someone who is about equally at home in the social world and the artistic one, and who in the final sense is conceivably not quite at home in either. His genius for letter-writing aside, he stands forth a familiar dilettante diner-out, an elegantly fussy bachelor, a delicately feline observer, dainty about food but greedy about gossip; very thin-skinned and vain; a connoisseur of wit, and an even greater connoisseur of social oddities and human blemishes. Walpole carefully examined every ointment on the chance of discovering a fly; hopefully tested every man's armour for chinks; and, I venture to suppose, went constantly to parties not so much to have a good time as to come away with a good story. And yet in all this, he is not to be thought unpleasant; there was less malice in it than sense of *métier*. As Beau Brummell dressed for future ages, or Lucullus dined, so Walpole, we may say, dined out. But he had more laborious pursuits. From his piecrust-battlemented house at Twickenham, from Strawberry Hill, we can almost date the Gothic Revival in English architecture; from his dungeony novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, we can almost date the Gothic Revival in English fiction. To be sure, a long suppressed romanticism was waiting in the wings to dash out upon the English scene; and if it leaned towards histrionics that was in part from its having not yet regained a human identity. But Walpole may have all the more romanticised the past from a strong need to satirise in the present; in addition, being habituated to a world of glitter, he might chiefly find romance in a world of gloom. He was, in any case, the historian of his own age alone; in terms of ages past, he was simply antiquary or melodramatist.

HORACE WALPOLE

At Strawberry, however, he set up a printing press whose productions are still collected; and his Memoirs of the reign of George III, by totally lacking genius, possess solid virtues of documentation. At Strawberry also—it is one reason why Walpole built it—he remained by himself or with one or two close friends for long periods; he rusticated and read, he received tidings by the incoming post and recast them for the outgoing one. It is necessary to note these withdrawals from society, this faintly ostentatious solitude; and as time passed Walpole, as he said, was to find it pleasantest to pay all his visits by letter. For he had that bachelor-breed characteristic, a good deal of tender sensibility which could make him, when aroused, exceedingly squeamish; and, when ruffled, extremely ill-natured. He had also a good deal of the snob in him. With his taste for special sauces, his snobbery had a peculiar flavour of its own—he was rather snobbish about snobs. More to his credit, he professed the 18th-century ideal of the aristocratic republican; though, when the French Revolution threatened to make a republic of England, it vanished. But for working people, even for workers on strike, he had much sympathy and even genuine feeling. On the other hand, for everything bourgeois, or that seemed to him bourgeois, for anyone with the slightest tradesman touch, or even with perfectly good professional standing, he showed scorn and contempt.

WALPOLE RUNS TRUE to type, again, in being—as a weathercock of taste—more gilded than dependable; in being often the dupe of fashion, or too inadaptably fastidious. It is always instructive to glance back along the corridors of criticism and see how many responsive, even distinguished, critics lacked—in terms of their great contemporaries—perception or sympathy, or even interest. But about the dislikes and mistakes of a Horace Walpole we can establish a kind of pattern. It is not just that his perspectives are too fixed, or his tastes too feminine. It is that Walpole forever cultivates a lesser thing at the expense of a greater; that his feeling for Gothic is really a love of rococo, that his sense of the visionary is in essence a taste for the lurid, that Heaven, for him, is hardly more than a garden and Hell hardly more than a grotto. He

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stands, of course, at the 18th-century point when the classical and the romantic would mate to produce that slight if charming period thing, the picturesque. Walpole was himself, indeed, a bit of a matchmaker in the alliance, in the course of which he could be something of an offender, too—one who worshipped winking idols and followed wandering lights. Strawberry Hill becomes a footnote in the revival of Gothic by virtue of having been something of a travesty on it. And that Walpole could not abide Chaucer or Michelangelo; that he could sniff, or snipe, at half the most enduring of his contemporaries, at Johnson, at Sterne, at Boswell, and eventually at Gibbon: if this is a kind of object-lesson in the vagaries of taste, it is an even better one in the limitations of tastefulness. There was, however, another and very 18th-century element involved. It might be less at times that Walpole couldn't get inside a Dr. Johnson's mind than that he couldn't get past his manners; less that he couldn't perceive Gibbon's greatness as a writer than that he pounced on his petty vanities as a man.

YET, BEFORE we speak of what lifts Walpole above mere type, of what at his best he did so perfectly, we must note the presence of genuine character and feeling in him, and of a kind, moreover, to charm or touch us. Thus, for one example, when his cousin General Conway lost his Court and Army posts, Walpole at once sat down and wrote a notably warm and generous letter, putting half his fortune at Conway's disposal. Like many touchy men Walpole had a great need for friends, and a certain real if complicated talent for friendship. At times his prickliness proved costly, though in the end he would assume the blame. How 18th-century a tone hovers over his years-after comment on the quarrel with Gray: "He loved me, and I did not think he did." Early and late Gray and Bentley, George Montague and John Chute, General Conway and Horace Mann were objects of his interest and affection; as were a succession of great ladies, along with nieces of Walpole's who turned into great ladies; and as finally, late in life, were the Miss Berrys. Meanwhile there was his career, his recording the life of his times in letter form. We pass with him from Ranelagh to the opera, from Houghton to Knole, now to a masquerade, now to a *fête champêtre*; to Oxford, Cambridge, Paris; to a great ball, a midnight fire, a dinner party where dinner, awaiting M.P.s, is three times brought to the table and three times taken away. We accompany Walpole to an auction of pictures, to Charles Fox losing a fortune at Brooks', to a conversation with Hogarth, a social call with Gibbon, a visit with Gray; now there is rioting over Wilkes, and now over Catholics; someone resigns, someone else elopes, someone else expires.

It resembles a great one-man news chronicle, with a beruffled columnist flavour. Do we want military comment?—there is the surrender at Yorktown:

> Well—there ends another volume of the American war. It looks a little as if the history of it would be all we should have for it, except forty millions of debts, and three other wars that have grown out of it.

Theatrical comment?—Walpole went to Drury Lane, the play was *Cymbeline*, and seemed, he says, "as long as if everybody in it went really to Italy in every act, and came back again." Political comment?

> The Duke of Dorset retires with a pension of £4000 a year, to make room for Lord Gower, that he may make room for Lord Temple. Lord Geo. Sackville forces out Lord Barrington from Secretary at War, who was going to resign with the rest for fear Mr. Fox *should*.... Lord Hardwicke, young disinterested creature, waits till something drops.

Shall it be comment on *décor*? "Blenheim looks like the palace of an auctioneer who has been chosen King of Poland." Or Walpole will write about nothing at all with that touch that proclaims the born letter-writer. "If you was dead," he tells Richard Bentley,

> to be sure you would have got somebody to tell me so. If you was alive, to be sure in all this time you would have told me so yourself. If you are not dead, I can tell you who is: don't be alarmed, it's only the Queen-Dowager of Prussia.

Or take this, with its suggestion of Congreve:

> Soh! Madam... it is very hard one can't come into your house and commend anything but you must recollect it and send it after one! I will never dine in your house again; and, when I do, I will like nothing; and when I do, I will commend nothing; and when I do, you shan't *remember* it.... I wonder you are not ashamed—I wonder you are not ashamed. Do you think there is no such thing as gluttony of the memory?

But in Walpole's letters there are the big scenes too, the epistolary tapestries—the coronation of George II, the events of the Gordon Riots, the beheading of the Jacobite lords:

> Then came old Balmerino, treading with the air of a general. As soon as he mounted the scaffold, he read the inscription on his coffin, as he did again afterwards. He then surveyed the spectators... and pulling out his spectacles, read a treasonable speech.... He said, if he had not taken the sacrament the day before, he would have knocked down Williamson, the lieutenant

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of the Tower, for his ill usage of him.... Then he lay down; but being told he was on the wrong side, vaulted round, and immediately gave the sign by tossing up his arm, as if he were giving the signal for battle.

Most of the time, of course, Walpole paints in the author while painting his scenes. "I could not help reflecting," he wrote once, "that living always in the world makes one as unfit for living out of it, as always living out of it does for living in it." This we may regard as a classic statement for the Walpole type, for the wordling temperament. For them, *urban* and *urbane* are one; culture and convenience are one; society is more fundamental than humanity. The ennui of the dinner party is for them a pretended affliction, quite unlike that solitary confinement called staying at home. Such men as these may yawn over the eternal sameness of things, but what a scent they have for novelty—for the new play, the latest witticism, last night's gaffe, this morning's gossip. They may grumble about *plus ça change*, but what they grumble over is at bottom what they desire. For they want the old reassuring faces quite as much as they enjoy the new look; with them, there exists that familiar social paradox—life, to be exhilarating, must shift with the speed and colour of a kaleidoscope; yet, where one's comfort and poise are concerned, it must not shift at all.

THIS LOVE OF THE BRAVURA, the bagatelle, the fashionable *frisson*, this emerging a *petit maître* or a connoisseur—every word describing these things is naturally a foreign one: it is from the long recital of such cravings and ambitions that we may insist on bringing larger values to bear. Yet we cannot deny that in his way Walpole is a decided master, who defines as he portrays, and who portrays a great deal. Here, figuratively, we are given all but the best in 18th-century music and painting, all but the finest Mozart or Watteau. Here, too, is almost everything we appreciate in a period's landscape, domestic architecture, and social art. In other words, here is that sense of style, at once careless and starched, frivolous and elegiac, that, if it went into curtseys and bows, and compliments and insults, and picnicking and dancing and duels, went also into how men painted and wrote, and certainly not least, wrote letters. Of letter-writing there has been no more resplendent age.

THE LARGER VALUES are for the most part all too obvious—humanity automatically reinstates *itself* above society, or life above a way of life. Of Walpole himself, however, we might still ask, why a *Castle of Otranto* and not a *Way of the World*? But then he, or you, may answer that he gave us precisely that. If we persist, and start bringing in, say, Proust, there is—even before we get round to the question of creative gifts—Walpole's wholly unphilosophic mind. He pictured society, he did not probe it; he saw Time not as theme or ironic hero, but as winged charioteer; as belonging to elegy, not epic. Yet he did very well by Time, by some sixty years of it, with a quill pen and sealing-wax. He did very well by himself, indeed he fulfilled himself, through making his limitations his ally. He was not of ample or porous enough mind to assimilate anything *really* new, so that for all his love of the last word in walking sticks or smart slang, in decoration or duplicity, Walpole, to the revolutionary voices of his age, seemed blind, deaf, insensible, uninterested, alien. He cultivated his garden, indeed; and so beautifully that nowhere else, nowhere untidier, was he really at ease, or at home, or himself.

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Richard Eberhart

Tones of Evening

If I could only express
The mauve light of a Spring evening,

If I could only catch the words on the wing,
The spectacular mauve of a Spring evening,

If I could only capture the cries
Of Canadian geese flying north in April,

If only the light, incomparable, would never diminish,
If only the love of the world were ever total,

If ever the love we feel and cherish
Were never destroyed by fate to make us fatal,

If only the incomparable light through the window
Of the soul as through the window in the evening

Could exist immiscible, be immitigable,
And if only the poem were perfect,

As we dream perfection when our love is strongest,
If I could only express mauves of an inexpressible ineluctability,

The deeper tones that are coming through the window,
The darker statures that are standing in the soul,

The radiancy of the language that is elusive,
Angels that protect us from the darkening of the evening,

The deeper tones that are of a strong imperfection,
And darkness now appears upon the panes,

The dark substratum strains to meet the intellect,
The unalterable truth raves about the street,

If I could only express superiority
To devils and angels to be free,

I would penetrate the great, shadowy stage
On which the highest words are thrown, and save.

Fishing for Snakes

Fishing for snakes
In the wide well of summertime
Depends upon the kind of rake
Best nets their slidy shine.

They will slip a butterfly net,
Which is too delicate, unsubtle,
But if persistent you can catch them yet,
On your belly in a downward effort.

It is an extension of the hand
Is the rake like a fan, and firm,
Wide, with fingers in a fixed half clench
Will sweep the well and fault their swim.

It is all a kind of trick,
Obscured in method, but never despair.
After exertion, with a certain flick,
You can fling them up in the air.

I don't say that I would kill one,
Although this is nothing to shun,
But I like to see the fellows run,
Wriggling away in an evil sun.

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At the Louvre with Miró

By Pierre Schneider

WHAT *do you say? We'll pretend we're walking in the country. Here we stroll. Here there is too much sun. Here we sit down and ask the farmwoman for a glass of milk. Otherwise, one gets bored in this place!*

Miró is worried and, to tell the truth, I share his apprehension. Visiting museums is a chore for children and their escorts. Have we not been told and re-told that what characterises Miró is "the gift of childhood?" Imagination in close touch with the unconscious; mind that cannot or will not distinguish reality from dream; proliferating experience uncensored by reason and unpruned by routine; ability to indulge with intense seriousness in games (some forbidden); unexpected perspective which enlarges certain details and atrophies certain "important" parts because the eye that contemplates and the hand that sets down the vision belong to one who barely reaches to the knees of grown-ups; sudden leaps from laughter to tears across the whole scale of grimaces; not to forget that jovial cruelty typical of the age we call tender and La Fontaine called pitiless. The temptation is strong indeed to interpret Miró's work in terms of childhood. Not the Countess de Ségur's image of childhood, to be sure, but that presented by modern psychology, which shows the child free, not of crimes but of remorse, and pure, but as one calls pure an undiluted poison. Miró? An adult technique at the disposal of a puerile world.

Such an interpretation reduces his work to a kind of naïve imagery, a peepshow on scenes of *l'humour noir* and *le drame rose*. It limits Miró's art singularly. For of what use is it to have been the first to free painting from the laws of gravitation if the forsaking of gravity was the price he had to pay for it? Is not a levity so boundless precisely that which we easily grant people whose actions do not carry much weight? If this were so, I should have committed, by asking Miró to submit to the present confrontation, an error in judgment and taste, an offence against decorum and an unforgivable confusion between text and margin.

This had indeed been my fear so long as I had never seen more than a few pictures by Miró at a time and been unable to compare different periods of the work otherwise than by memory or photography. The retrospective at the Musée d'Art Moderne in 1962 (there was a recent exhibition in London at the Tate) upset my notion of the Catalan painter. A new one superseded, without repudiating it. Taken individually, the units were as I knew them, but out of their sum grew a new quantity, or more precisely, quality. Once it had appeared, it abolished all that had preceded it and prepared it. Far from becoming dispersed in the wealth of its own invention, as occurs when ingeniousness alone holds sway, the breathtaking diversity of Miró's periods, the lightning succession—*sol y sombra*—of the episodes do not add up to a mere narrative, a "comic strip," jocular or atrocious in turn; they engender a new dimension which indifferently devours humour, imagination, anecdote, dream and reality. I remember the words which came to my mind: gravity, solemnity. The forms were wriggling, twisting frantically on the walls, yet the thing was motionless. Amidst the plethora of the picturesque and the singular displayed before us, the thing was neutral, anonymous. And upon reflection, I realised that it was identical with another presence: that which eats its way through the overabundance of museums, swallowing up stories and history just as, under my very eyes, at the Palais de Tokyo, it devoured the episodes of one man's career. Miró says:

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"At bottom, my painting is not opposed to what one sees in the Louvre. Everything is linked!"

He had gone there the very morning following his arrival in Paris, in 1918.

"I went every day, I wanted to see all the painting. When I arrived in Paris, I was disoriented, paralysed. For three or four months, I was incapable of painting. My companions set to work, without problems. But at heart, I was pleased with my incapacity. It proved that I had been jarred. Later, at the time when I was painting the portrait of Mrs. Mills, I came here every afternoon. It helped me by providing a shock, an opposition. What impressed me chiefly was those Dutch interiors where you see a tiny dot—tac!—like a fly's eye. For me, that was the capital thing. It was more than minuteness: it was the sharp point in a canvas of some size... sharp, luminous—a microbe's eye.

"I was also attracted by force. Rembrandt, the impact of power. Later, I went back in spurts. Whenever I launched on a new venture, I came to see the classics. But I never copied anything, except at Barcelona, when I was fourteen years old, and then I copied Urgell. Now that I have found an equilibrium, I come less often to the Louvre. It is a need, I don't reason about it!"

But I tell myself that this "grave resonance," while making to-day's visit more normal, renders the mystery of Miró's work still more profound. The museum has all the time to kill time; it displays so many manners, subjects so diverse, that they end by cancelling out one another. In Miró's case, the passage into the state of solemn abstraction is instantaneous, despite the visible presence of the concrete. There must be, in every canvas, a precise point, a given moment—*a fly's eye*—where everything tilts, where the call of the wild intersects the call of duty. Attention cannot afford to relax a second: that second may be precisely the one where what one was lying in wait for jumps and, before one has recollected one's spirits, disappears.

To determine the conditions of this dizzying conversion of smallness to grandeur, that is what I was expecting from our visit to the Louvre; I hoped that Miró's instinct, being removed from its habitual grounds and safer than in the area of his own creativity, would show itself less prompt, less wary, and hence allow me to catch his procedure. Still, it was no easy task and he had given me warning:

"You know, I don't know how to talk. You will have to pay attention to what I do—when I scratch my nose, when I stop, when I nudge you with my elbow. And also, how I am silent."

Miró's silences... well, I was determined to escape their traps, but they got the better of me. No matter how hard I try, it is always I who break them. Miró also commands a glibness more impenetrable than silence. Just so insects, the better to hide, borrow the colour of the ground they crawl on. Then too, there are all those words that are "our words," but that (probably) do not mean the same thing when Miró uses them. Finally, while he is open to influences and responds to the outside world, he does so in a way different from ours. Like children listening to the conversation of grown-ups, he interprets the world according to his own bias: his reflections are deflections.

"I am not sensitive to wind, temperature, rain, or sun," he says, as the dark clouds over the Tuileries impel us to talk about the weather. *"But I feel the changes of the moon."*

What is true of Miró's work is thus also true of his words: they require, not interpretation, but deciphering. To provide the reader of the mystery story with the key to the enigma is to deprive him of the better part of his pleasure. Besides, what assurance have I that my key is the right one? Indeed, is a key really necessary? Have I not imagined obscurities where all is candour? It will be wise, therefore, to resist as best I can the temptation of explaining and classifying, and simply to record.

DEATH, they say, puts things in their place. At any rate, the long hall lined with Roman sarcophagi brings into order the crowd agglutinated before the entrance. Like officers rallying their troops after the seizure of a fortress, the guards attempt to marshal their groups after passing the controls. Miró remains spellbound at the sight of an arm, apparently without bodily connections, brandishing a piece of yellow paper above a sea of heads. (And I am reminded at once of the *membra*, no less alive for being *disjecta*, in Miró's painting, for instance, "Hand Catching a Bird.") At the end of the hall, a slight hesitation. An incipient traffic jam on the left (the Venus de Milo lurks that way) makes us veer to the right.

Roman sculpture. Miró passes, looking worried, without a word until he sees a Fayum portrait of a woman—the one who wears a big jewel: *"It looks a bit like the Lady of Elche,*

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eh?" Another portrait, the head triangular: *"Ah! It is beautiful."* He clicks his tongue like a child presented with an ice cream cone. *"Like a little cat! And the look in her eyes! How living, how mysterious, when compared to the Mona Lisa's. And that mauve—almost like a Bonnard! Look at the shape of those earrings! Nothing but that* (it forms a kind of parabola, terminated by three circles): *what a picture it would make if one enlarged it!"* Another portrait, the model of negroid features, more brutal in execution: *"It is stranger than a Rouault."*

He puts on his spectacles, takes them off, puts them on again, utters a noise that sounds roughly like *tsk, tsk. "The long nose, the eyes set close together, it reminds me of El Greco, I wonder why?"* He comes to a halt, petrified by attention. *"Ah yes, he squints, there, that's why!"* Long silence. *"What colour, what plastic rigour!"* The portrait of a native woman reminds him of *"those Catalan things, because of their intensity, the folds, the volumes of nose and cheeks."* About the head of a native man: *"It's as strong, as brutal as a Negro sculpture."* And after a sweeping glance, he adds:

"A small room, with nothing but this, it would be as imposing as a room filled with paintings by Vermeer or Corot. As a matter of fact, this grisaille *is like Corot: tiny things, but everything is visible."*

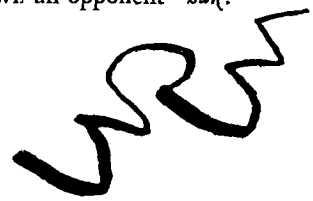
Silence while we rapidly cross the room devoted to classic Roman sculpture. At the end, in a kind of purgatorial waiting-room, various Late Roman and Paleo-Christian fragments. Miró stops in front of a piece of mosaic carrying an inscription:

"What plastic rigour! I cannot imagine it larger or smaller. It is just right. What freedom, what rigour! If this mosaic is something minor, then major painting bores me—excepting Corot."

"Does your interest in this mosaic stem from the fact that it speaks to us?"

"No. Before and above all, it is the visual shock that matters. Afterwards, one wants to find out what it says, what it represents. But only afterwards."

Miró declared himself fascinated, as never before, by script. *"My own writing has changed, my signature, for instance. I want to do a series of canvases as black as a schoolboy's slate, with the letters of the alphabet—zak! zak!"* This onomatopoeia is accompanied by the coachman's whiplike gesture. *"Take the date, March 5, 1963."* With quick, incisive gestures, he writes it in the air, prolonging the verticals all the way to the ground, savagely, as if he were cutting down an opponent—*zak.*



"That earring we saw before: three pearls, tac, tac, tac—and zak! On a huge canvas. A simple line and a red circle as final period. But how that period is placed! With infinitesimal precision. You can't move it by a hair's breadth. Yes, I have done things like that, in the past, but I relied on sensitiveness. They were like the respiration of life. Now I am concerned with something more brutal, like a dagger-blow, like the letters in the mosaic of Henchir Msadiné. Look: it has the rigour of a book's structure, it is worlds apart from handwriting. At the moment, for me, who wishes to do a book, all these mosaics are a lesson. Yes, the book excites me more and more. It is a form of architecture. If every part is not in its right place, the whole thing collapses. Then, too, I like working with artisans. It is an excellent experience, provided one does not take oneself for a genius, provided one does not give orders but collaborates with them. I owe much to artisans."

We have entered the room of mosaics from Africa. Miró whistles with admiration in front of the "Phoenix," nods his head. *"Beautiful, that. Nothing more to be said, in front of that."* But the "Parrots" whose bodies have the shape of a whip—straight handle and curved lash—prompt him to say: *"Zak—and there you are."* And in the tragic tangle of the "Amazonomachia" he draws my attention to a part of the mountain which begins in the shape of a nun and ends in that of an umbrella: *"Only that, but to make a monument 60 feet high out of it, and set it on the Place de la Concorde."* Before a mosaic found at Constantine, representing the Triumph of Neptune and Amphitrite, conventionally, skilfully modelled and quite worthy of the Renaissance, he sighs: *"One can't breathe. It is like wearing a suit that is too tight, or having a badly placed button."* And before "The Reclining River," a specimen of official Roman painting: *"It only seems right. In reality, one could easily shift about the figures."* And after a long, despondent silence: *"Allons dans mon quartier."*

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His QUARTIER: Sumer. Hardly has he entered the first of the Mesopotamian rooms, than he becomes intensely wakeful. *"Look,"* he says, squeezing my elbow, *"look at that girl, the bag at the end of a chain dangling from the stiff arm!"* Silence, until the arm has vanished. *"In the past, I came to the Louvre chiefly for the paintings. Now, more and more, I come for this. Except for Corot. Daylight, a landscape by Corot. Tiny little strokes—ping! ping! ping!—in their right places. And the man's dignity. Where do you find it to-day? And his humility! He would not have felt unhappy to remain almost anonymous. Calm."*

Here too, the atmosphere is calm, silent, warmly anonymous. *"The least thing is beautiful, here."* Miró suggests that we glide through the rooms, quickly, without any set idea, allowing the works to stop us as we go by. Almost at once, we halt. Before the "Fountain in the shape of an eagle" (Tello): *"Ah!"* The hand rises and falls again in a gesture of admiration and despair. At the sight of the "Prince of Lagash" (Gudea): *"You can't pass this quickly."* Babylonia, on the other hand, makes us quicken our step. *"Here, it's different. It is the man who says: I want this, I want that! One feels it and it bothers."* We race down a staircase, climb up on the opposite side, and suddenly Miró freezes in front of five Carthaginian steles lined up on the steps like cactuses.

"What a beautiful ensemble! Why is it in the stairway? Are they ashamed of it? It is minor art, I suppose. But next to it what is a major art?"

A side-raid brings us to the collection of Luristan bronzes recently bequeathed to the Louvre by M. Coiffard. Miró has already come to see them several times. Actually, it is not surprising that he should like them: do they not display the same strange hybridisations, the same grafts which invariably take hold in his own work? *"Little things, but grand."* And before a small horse bit, *"It is like a Chinese signature."* We move towards the exit between two rows of huge Assyrian mythological beasts. *"They are less grand than one of those little bronzes."*

Outside we pause, dazed:

"It is like coming off an airplane after an eighteen-hour flight. One no longer knows what time it is, nor where one finds oneself. How beautiful the sky is to-day!"

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, we begin our second visit the very minute the gates open, for Miró thinks that we proceeded a bit hastily, yesterday. When you do a thing, you do it well, *i.e.*, thoroughly. Here we are again, therefore, amidst the clamouring cicerones. Remembering the episodes of the preceding day, I point out to Miró that, already, his picture "Tilled Land" was filled with human members that had chosen to lead their own life: feet, hands, eyes.

"Yes," replies Miró, *"even as a child, I was haunted by a hand, by eyes, in flowers and trees. I regarded plants as human beings. I had painted a 'Bouquet'; at the tip of the stems I put fragments of a face, an eye, a hand."*

I ask him: "Feet too?" He thinks it over, slowly, seriously.

"No, not feet."

While we are returning to the Chaldean section, he says: *"My imaginary world is linked to life. At home, in the afternoon, I take walks. It is reality that gives me the shock, the ideas. A wall, a pebble. A sign is something truly living for me—never abstract. I see this sign beginning to move, it walks out of the room, strolls across the Carousel. The life of a work is just that: being able to take a walk. Up there, in the rooms devoted to painting, there are many works that have never gone for a walk."*

Around us now, those civilisations that mark the dawn of history.

"History makes no difference to me. A small Pompeian landscape and a Corot belong to the same time. The shock which illuminates me has nothing to do with time. Time does not exist for me."

While Miró is speaking, his eye, taking advantage of the diversion, scampers and goes about its own business. It is a round eye, so intense that one would swear it is lidless. I have the impression that it belongs to someone else than the person who converses with me, lifts his arms in the gesture of the supplication, clicks his tongue and cries before a glass case filled with very small Tello objects of the late fourth millenary: *"Ah! Enormous! Do they consider this a great art, or not? Those little things, they fill an enormous room. How can one respond to painting after one has seen those things?* (A silence.) *Art? Most likely, they did not even know the word."*

"Do you think of it—Art, I mean—when you work?"

"Me?" (He explodes with laughter.) *"Artiste-peintre!"*

Though Miró admires all that is here, his

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special predilection, it seems to me, goes to objects of bizarre shape, asymmetrical, tattooed with inscriptions, like the Tello shard on which is drawn an elk's silhouette: *"Incredible! A mural with nothing but this form, what a painting it would make!"* Or like the "Fountain in the form of an eagle" which had attracted us yesterday: *"This butterfly woman, with her little eyes, what a marvel . . . that and the colossal statue of Gudea."* For the admiring eye skips from the small terracotta figures to the great basalt blocks, to that Tello sculpture of which only the lower part survives: the robe of feathers and, in their niche, the feet—*all alone, all alive.* And also the statue of Manishinsu (Susa): *"Very moving, this block with those pleats, like rain flowing across it. Everything is in it: figure, landscape, one can't tell. An almost invisible fringe on the monumental architecture of the statue."*

BUT AGAIN, how render account of that essential part of the dialogue: silence? Miró is at home in it, at least the other Miró, who commands the lidless eye. Few are the clues that enable me to understand him: eyebrows more or less knit, shoulders shrugged, an air more or less worried. Speech seldom lights that other side. It is speech that interrupts the silence, not the other way round. Tame, controlled, amiable speech—out of kindness, to be sure, but also to forestall indiscreet intrusions.

We have reached the Egyptian section. As in Chaldea, writing has captured the sultry massiveness of stone in its tight, fine web. *"After the cuneiform we have just seen, it looks dead. It smacks of ministries, of consulates."* Miró looks glummer by the minute, so much so that he realises it and makes a great effort to be polite. Before the stele of the Serpent-King (Thinite), *"Had we begun from this end, we would have stopped before it. But after the Chaldeans. . . ."* A thick column covered with hieroglyphic incisions: *"The fellows who engraved this surely kept looking at their watch to see if it wasn't time to have a glass of wine. Its tremendous . . . but for people who talk about Art."*

We walk swiftly, till we come upon the "Chancellor Nakhti" frozen in his wooden fold (Middle Empire). *"Here we can stop for a moment,"* he says, but it will be his last concession. Not even the exquisite "Bearer of Offerings" (XIIth dynasty) will cheer him up: *"Pretty, but too refined."* And we move on, in morose silence. The latter will be broken only as we pass again the foot of the grand staircase, underneath which Miró espies the huge, darkly vaulted, many levelled shed crammed with Roman busts, mechanical ladders, empty pedestals. *"Very mysterious, sheer Piranesi,"* he states, suddenly comforted. And instead of bending his steps towards the exit, the object of my secret yearning—we have been walking for three hours—he trots up the grand staircase against the current of the crowd.

"All these people are going home satisfied: mission accomplished. One ought to deliver them a certificate at the exit."

The prospect of the rooms devoted to French painting opens before us: a good half mile of pigment, I would say. Miró waves his hands: *"It does one good, this visit to the Louvre. Especially because, thanks to you, we do it thoroughly."* The head growing tired more easily than the legs, I am happy that he proposes the method we lately applied to Antiquity: to walk quickly and see what is capable of catching our eye. Silence (which I fancy to be dismayed) in front of the great juggernauts. Before David's "Leonidas": *"This is really a bit cruel, what we are doing!"* A pause, and then: *"You need cruelty in life, or else you go dull."* Ingres, Girodet, Guérin, Chassériau, Courbet—*"Here we stop."* It is not an order, but an observation, for he has already come to a halt in front of "The Studio." *"This female nude has all the grandeur of what we saw downstairs."* And as if he had only come to find this vindication, at last, of our time, Miró suggests that we end our visit then and there.

"WHAT *a good idea it was, yesterday, to proceed at top speed, like American tourists! And in spite of it all, in front of Courbet, we were nailed to the spot. Zak!"*

And so it is with Courbet that we decide to inaugurate our third morning at the Louvre.

"In 1918, when I arrived in Paris, I liked above all Mantegna and Ingres. I had even gone to see his drawings at Montauban. To-day, I prefer this."

He is pointing towards Courbet's "Wave." *"One feels physically drawn to it, as by an*

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undercurrent. It is fatal. Even if this picture had been behind our backs, we would have felt it."

In the following room, where insipidities by Chassériau have temporarily taken Delacroix' place next to the Géricaults and the Gros, his eye is soon magnetised by the closest of the Courbets, "The Cliff at Etrétat after the Storm."

"It is fatal. With Courbet, one has the impression of a big rock emerging from a plain. The 'Raft of the Medusa,' next to it, is beautiful, but one doesn't sense this force of nature."

Catching sight of "The Studio" and of the "Funeral at Ornans," he lapses into a long silence punctuated by several salvoes of *"Fatal! Fatal!"* He lingers before "The Studio."

"The plate, or whatever it is, on the wall. One is drawn to it. An Egyptian thing, next to that, doesn't stand up. Magical! Those turbid nuances on the left. The brutality on the right. And Baudelaire reading: consider the book. And the accent of light, near the temples."

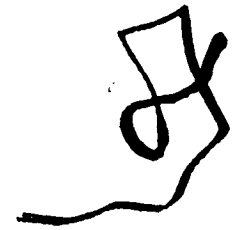
Miró steps nearer, steps away, puts on his spectacles, takes them off, utters sounds of *tsk! tsk!* while nodding his head and without once ceasing to scrutinise the enormous canvas. People stop, observe him—not the painting—walk on.

"Incomprehensible, this indifference of theirs! And yet there is a physical force in it! They are like people who do not feel that the sun is beating on their backs and who become crimson without knowing it."

We step closer to the "Burial," and here I am given an insight into how, in art, things encounter, influence each other and are linked. The process is that of a wedding between eye and object so intimate that one cannot tell which one aroused the other. In this "Burial," which I fancied I knew by heart, my eyes, no doubt reshaped under the influence of my companion, discover, for the first time, at the lower end of the bluish-white cloth covering the coffin, six or seven commas—*zak!*—which Miró might have signed and which, in fact, he does sign, in a manner of speaking:

"If you took only this, what a painting it would make!" He adds: *"It is savage, brutal, and at the same time there is this fineness. He is one of the greatest fellows in the history of art. What a museum it would be, if you filled it only with things of this power! Even mixed, I don't care!"*

A last glance on the Galerie—*"Only Gros' 'Battle of Eylau' stands up beside the Courbets"*—and on to the Beistegui Collection. *"The eighteenth century? No! Watteau? Yes!"* Still, before Goya's "Marchesa of La Solana," he smiles, sighs: *"As simple as a Chinese wash."* And Corot's "Woman with the Pearl" causes him to make the gesture of supplication. *"With that pearl, ping! Tsk, tsk! Eh, oui.... Ah, la, la...."* Of the nearby Ingres, he will say: *"Very beautiful, but after you have seen the portrait by Corot...."*



On account of the Delacroix Exhibition, the Grande Galerie is half closed. We are unable to recognise anything, not even the Mona Lisa, trapped as she now is in a dead end. I am reminded of the guide in a Loire *château* who for years had recited explanations learned by heart to tourists. One day, a number of works were shifted about. Next day, pointing to a Renaissance closet, the guide enjoined the visitors to admire a Daumier. Nobody seemed astonished, and he went on in this fashion till the visit was over.

Ours is not likely to last much longer, for Miró has grown sombre again and accelerated the pace. In the Italian section, he merely stops before Uccello's "Battle," now flanked by the two large Mantegnas: *"We are back with the great things, here. I still like Mantegna a lot, but it remains cold."* Not till we have reached the other end of the Galerie does Miró again break his silence. In front of Poussin's self-portrait: *"That too is somebody!"* And "Autumn," "Summer," "The Bacchanale with the Lute Player" elicit from him those noises and gestures in which admiration and attention are fused.

We race through the Flemish room and past the Medici Rubenses. By the Rembrandts we pause. I dare not confess to Miró that I am done in. Apprehensively, he asks: *"We're not going to look at the entire Louvre, are we?"* And I tremble upon realising that, had he not been as tired as I, we *would* assuredly have seen it all, meticulously, conscientiously. We make for the exit. We remark that though we had stayed a shorter time than on our two previous visits, we were more exhausted (a consequence of what we saw?). In passing, the Pietà of Avignon prompts him to comment—without my being able to guess whether he means it as praise or as criticism: *"That's something serious, that is."* At any rate, only the "Martyrdom of Saint George" by Martorell, a kind of Catalan Bosch, horribly cruel, succeeds in restoring Miró's gay spirits.

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THEATRE

Eliot: From Ritual to Realism

By John Gross

ONE OF THE PARADOXES of T. S. Eliot's career was that as his fame spread and he became a public figure, his poetry grew steadily more private, more inward-turning. The young Eliot created a world, the middle-aged Eliot kept a journal. No doubt the impersonal manner of the early poems was a disguise, and the amateur psychoanalysts are standing by; no doubt, too, Eliot himself would have rejected the idea that he spoke for his generation as hopelessly crude. But it remains true that he wrote *The Waste Land* and its companion pieces out of a sense of his own age, and that in return he handed on to that age an idiom and a mythology. The poems which he published when he was still virtually unknown outside a small circle were to have the effect, in Wyndham Lewis' unforgettable phrase, of the little musk which gradually scents the whole room. But it was another story with Mr. Eliot the Nobel laureate, the West End hit, the sixty-year-old smiling public man. From *Ash Wednesday* onwards his poems had come more and more to resemble spiritual exercises—which meant that for those unable to share the author's religion, they seemed less and less relevant to the world at large. To describe *The Waste Land* as a poem of the 'twenties is to point up some of its virtues; but to make too much of *Little Gidding* as a poem of the 'forties would be to do Eliot a disservice.

None of this need trouble us unduly, however; we are, after all, perfectly capable of suspending our disbelief (so much easier to suspend than belief), granting a poet the right to be self-centred, conceding that there are passages in the *Quartets* as fine as anything that Eliot ever wrote. Had the rest been silence, even the most pagan of Eliot's admirers would have been bound to acknowledge the shapeliness of his literary career and the congruity of its close. But one of the main functions of poets is to disoblige their admirers, and we are in fact left with those three last plays on our hands. Having arrived in the *Quartets* at a state of mind so specialised as to be barely communicable, Eliot went on to devote what remained of his energy to the most unashamedly public of poetic activities, writing for the theatre.

Was it a mistake? In all probability, yes. Certainly at his death Eliot's standing as a poet was secure, while his reputation as a dramatist was in the trough of the wave. The success of *The Cocktail Party* already seems to belong to a vanished era. Admittedly eras in general vanish rather quickly nowadays, and posterity will doubtless revise the current verdict. There is enough wit, craftsmanship, and invention in both *The Cocktail Party* and *The Confidential Clerk* to keep the flame burning, and even a non-believer can find their austerity and their incidental insights impressive. (As regards *The Elder Statesman*, I'm afraid I'm compelled to agree with the reviewer who said that it reminded him of nothing so much as the competition pages of the *New Statesman*.) But if at least the first two plays of the final trio deserve to live, it is only as a curious appendage to Eliot's major work. And anyone wanting to learn about the use of poetry in the modern theatre would be justified in feeling that they have comparatively little to teach him, now that Brecht and Beckett have been assimilated.

ELIOT'S TRUE IMPORTANCE to the theatre lies elsewhere—in his essays, in *Murder in the Cathedral*, and in his non-dramatic poetry. Non-dramatic in the purely technical sense, that is, since perhaps the most striking single quality of Eliot's early verse is its intensely dramatic power. We have all grown tired of hearing how he brought colloquial speech back into poetry, even a little sceptical; but it was a tremendous achievement nonetheless. His rhythms, however heightened or tightened, are basically those of the natural speaking voice: so much so, that we must all have had the experience of suddenly

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recalling an Eliot line—

After such knowledge, what forgiveness?

or

my self-possession gutters: we are really in the dark

or

That is not what I meant at all. That is not it, at all

—recalling it, and applying it to a situation in real life quite different from the one in the poem where it occurs.

But Eliot's claim to be called a dramatic poet rests as much on his ability to create character as on his mastery of speech. Prufrock and Sweeney are more memorable, more instantly recognisable than the characters of any other modern poet, or indeed than those of most modern novelists. It is true that we know very little about them, and even less about the other members of the cast who throng the early poems. Eliot's art was that of the vignette, the broken image, the wistful backward glance, the caricaturist's lightning sketch: his characters are not so much studied as overheard or impaled. But they take on a tantalising existence all the same, as the full-blown characters in the later plays never do. A phrase is enough to bring them to life. How much more vivid, how much more *interesting*, are the silent man in mocha brown, or Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians, than Julia Shuttlethwaite, or Eggerson, or the last sad wraiths like Mrs. Carghill and Gomez.

By the early 'twenties Eliot had certainly forged an adequate dramatic idiom. Could he have devised a corresponding dramatic form? In his essays on the Elizabethans and Jacobeans he is more concerned with the quality of the verse, and with local effects, than with questions of form and overall design. The essays were brilliantly effective in counteracting the views of William Archer (and, by implication, Shaw); but, as with all effective criticism, they contain much of what looks at first like detailed analysis but turns out on closer inspection to be no more than skilful propaganda. If there was one lesson more than another which Eliot learned from Matthew Arnold, it was the importance of *appearing* to be precise. At any rate, for all its enduring merits Eliot's criticism gives one very little idea of how he would have proposed to hammer out a dramatic structure in his early period. But he does provide an important clue in the two fragments of *Sweeney Agonistes*, originally entitled "Wanna Go Home, Baby?" and re-written, somewhat improbably, on the advice of Arnold Bennett, to whom Eliot had submitted a first draft for criticism in 1924. *Sweeney Agonistes* is incomplete and obscure, but as far as it goes distinctly promising. It suggests that Eliot could have developed his own brand of expressionist drama: he uses music-hall patter much as the German expressionists used vaudeville, along with jazz-rhythms, parody, fantastic imagery. (It has also been pointed out that the piece contains a few echoes of *The Great Gatsby*.) There is no pretence of contact or communication between the suffering protagonist and the other characters, who are simply sinister marionettes; and all the evidence suggests that Eliot would have been better equipped to create a puppet-theatre rather than one where real men and women interact, which is what he eventually tried to do. But as it is, *Sweeney Agonistes* remains the only hint of what might have been. It is comparable in this respect with Auden's early charade, *Paid on Both Sides*, which is a mess but also contains some of the most exciting dramatic verse written in this century: taken together the two would make an intriguing double bill.

Even before *Sweeney Agonistes* had been published, Eliot's thoughts on the drama were running in another direction, along a path which led straight to *Murder in the Cathedral*. In 1926 he wrote the introduction to an edition of *Savonarola*, a closet-drama in rhyming couplets by Charlotte Eliot. (I leave it to others to consider how far he was trying to emulate his mother when he himself wrote a verse-play about martyrdom. There are no obvious verbal parallels; nor would Eliot have been capable of describing Becket, as his mother described Savonarola in her list of characters, as "a great moral reformer." *Savonarola* has charm, although there are moments—*"a coward and a slave/No della Robbia'll be"*—when it recalls the play of the same name in Max Beerbohm's story.) Eliot's introductory remarks are as near as he ever came to laying down a programme:

> Dramatic form may occur at various points along a line the terminal points of which are liturgy and realism; at one extreme the arrow-dance of the Todas and at the other Sir Arthur Pinero—or at least the ideal Pinero of Mr. William Archer, who abundantly proved, in attempting to prove the contrary, the complete futility of complete realism. In genuine drama the form is determined by the point on the line at which a tension between liturgy and realism takes place.

He goes on to point out, in words which he was to repeat almost exactly in his Harvard lecture on "Poetry and Drama" a quarter of a century later, that the prose of Congreve or Shaw is highly artificial: "for realistic speech we must go again to Sir Arthur Pinero and his

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peers." The next step for the drama is in the opposite direction, but it is too late to reinstate blank verse or the heroic couplet. "Probably a new form will be devised out of colloquial speech"—with the emphasis on form, since "the play, like a religious service, should be a stimulant to make life more tolerable and augment our ability to live."

WHETHER OR NOT *Murder in the Cathedral* augments our ability to live, it is certainly a remarkable piece of work. It is Eliot's one indubitable theatrical triumph, and the one English addition to the classic repertoire since Shaw. A sacrificial ritual rather than a tragedy, perhaps, with all the political implications of a clash between Church and State tucked neatly out of sight. The spectator who is unwilling to be drawn into the action as a silent member of the chorus may well conclude that the driving force behind the play is a horror of life and a longing for extinction: this is martyrdom for martyrdom's sake, and the rejection of the Fourth Tempter—

The last temptation is the greatest treason:
To do the right deed for the wrong reason

—is shadow-boxing, moral casuistry. But the anguish is real enough. Those crustacean horrors of the Chorus, for instance ("I have eaten smooth creatures still living, with the strong salt taste of living things under sea . . . and they live and spawn in my bowels") are far more disturbing than the shellfish in Sartre's *Altona*; and the *Dies Irae* is something more than a pastiche:

Numb the hand and dry the eyelid,
Still the horror, but more horror
Than when tearing in the belly.

Critics often suggest that the prose-passages—the sermon, and the Knights' sub-Shavian attempts to justify themselves—are the best things in the play, and if the verse was primarily intended to advance an argument or to illustrate character, this would indeed be the case. But what we have is a ceremony, not a debate; the roles are pre-ordained, and there is no interest in individual psychology. (If one must have a Theatre of Cruelty, the play would be a better candidate for inclusion than most.) Naturally the verse is extremely formal and heavily patterned; but it would be a mistake to underrate its variety and dramatic appropriateness, or the originality of the whole conception. Eliot himself, in *Poetry and Drama*, denied that there was any "positive novelty" in the poetry of *Murder in the Cathedral*, but one shouldn't take this too seriously: at the time he was trying to explain how he had arrived at the versification (or prosification) of *The Cocktail Party*. In any event, one has to go back to Milton to find a comparable English drama on a sacred theme. But *Murder in the Cathedral* is artistically superior to *Samson Agonistes*: it is better written, and the underlying egoism is more skilfully concealed.

COULD ELIOT have repeated this unique success? *The Family Reunion*, four years later, was betwixt and between: it contained some fine poetry, but the symbolism was inadequate, even embarrassing. Eliot was pushing his gifts in the wrong direction when he tried to put contemporary, more-or-less realistic characters on the stage, as the later plays were to confirm. Why the man who had once written that "the great vice of English drama from Kyd to Galsworthy has been that its aim of realism was unlimited" should himself have moved from lesser to greater realism remains something of a mystery; it may be that he came to see his first duty as indirectly making converts, and wanted to reach a wider audience. Of course, the realism of his last plays is very much of the surface, and certainly not unlimited. But to introduce realistic criteria at all is dangerous. Who are all these well-bred bores and sententious busy-bodies? Irrelevant literal-minded considerations start pressing in, Lord Claverton, for instance. Happy the elder statesman who has nothing worse on his conscience than a car-smash and a discarded mistress. But what about his public career? The convention doesn't allow us to overlook it as easily as Becket's. And with suchlike distractions, the life trickles out of the play.

It may well be that the revival of poetic drama is of importance only from the point of view of the poet, anxious to extend his art or to re-establish contact with his audience, and that the drama itself can jog along very nicely on a diet of ungarnished prose. And many would claim that Eliot's very aloofness frustrated his ambitions; if he only had looked down, like Mr. Pinter, he would have seen that the streets were paved with rough demotic poetry. Certainly he left no active disciples, and the next poet who turns to the theatre will have to work out his own salvation. But what Eliot has left is an example of unwavering artistic integrity, and a glimpse of what might be achieved: enough to persuade any successor that the undertaking is worthwhile.

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NOTES & TOPICS

T. S. Eliot

"THESE TEARS are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree." Like all major artists, Eliot aroused ferocious hostility, and a collection of the abuse hurled at his work and personality would form an impromptu biography of the dark side of twentieth-century intellectual life: all the way from Arthur Waugh's description of *The Waste Land* as "the ravings of a drunken helot" or whatever it was, to the vast mechanical hostility of the Soviet literary bureaucracy ("a hyena with a typewriter," etc.); embracing *en route* the growlings of cracker-barrel Americans of the Carl Sandburg type, which became particularly menacing round about 1940, when Eliot was doing some of his finest work. And yet, in spite of all this, one still hears Eliot spoken of as a conformist, a man of the establishment who made suspiciously few enemies! Had it not been that with his uncompromising mind there went a modesty and good sense that never seemed to fail, the list of his quarrels would have made the career of Wyndham Lewis look like a sewing bee.

In any case, to a man who has serious ideas and is able to be serious about them, there is one thing much worse than mere abuse and that is misrepresentation. The opponent who screams insults, calling you a drunken helot or a hyena, sets up no real obstacle to the transmission of your ideas; it is the well-meaning fool who thinks he has grasped them, who starts with a chip of your meaning and subsequently whittles that chip away to a splinter, who can destroy everything you have tried to achieve. This happened to Eliot for forty years, and it is a measure of the man's goodness and moderation that he never lost his temper about it.

The central misunderstanding of Eliot's ideas occurred, as with a poet it is bound to occur, in the matter of his relationship to the poetic language; that is, to the English language itself. The version of his attitude which filtered down to the average educated man in the street—the average reader, say, of the literary pages of the weekly press—could be put as follows:

> T. S. ELIOT *died in London on January 4th at the age of seventy-six.* JOHN WAIN *(born 1925), poet, novelist, and critic, lives in Oxford. Next month* STEPHEN SPENDER *will contribute a personal memoir.*

"Ideally, the language of poetry, including its rhythms, is very close to the spoken language of its time. But the spoken language is continually changing. Forms, and rhythmical conventions, devised by major poets and used by them to express the inner sensibility of their age, stand still and become fixed and ossified, while the living language moves on and leaves them behind. Hence, every hundred years or so, there has to be a wholesale burning of the books, a breaking of conventions, and a return to 'the real language of men.' Eliot has accomplished this for our time. In his criticism, and in his poetic example, he is revolutionary, and among his predecessors the poets who interest him are those who have made a violent break with the past (Donne, Laforgue) or, without the necessity of such a break, have worked close to the grain of the spoken language (the Jacobean dramatists). He stands against the formal and the orchestral, and for the dramatic and the colloquial."

I HAVE AVOIDED stating this common view of Eliot in its more blurred and self-contradictory forms, and given it what I hope is a moderate and sensible formulation, because, after all, Eliot's work has been read by a great many people who are not fools, and a mere travesty of his opinions would not have been widely accepted for so many years. The generally received picture was not outright false. It was, one would rather say, damagingly inadequate. Eliot's early association was with Ezra Pound and the Imagists, and this in itself tended to start criticism off on a wrong scent. Pound, at that time, evidently thought of words almost entirely as aesthetic objects. In the celebrated manifesto by Pound and F. S. Flint (*Poetry*, March 1913) laying down the principles of Imagism, the aspirant is advised to immerse himself in the study of "cadences," divorced from the meaning of the words that make up the cadence:

> Let the candidate fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language so that the meaning of the words may be less likely to divert his attention from the movement; *e.g.* Saxon charms, Hebridean Folk Songs, the verse of Dante, and the lyrics of Shakespeare—if he can dissociate the vocabulary from the cadence.

This view assimilates language to music in the most crude and least helpful fashion. Eliot could hardly have been impressed by such superficial notions, but it was not until many years later that he gave a full statement of his own position. This was his lecture, "The Music of Poetry," delivered in Glasgow in 1942 and reprinted in his collection of 1956, *On Poetry and Poets*. It

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should be read and digested by anyone hoping to get the most from Eliot's work as a poet; here, I can only select a few points for immediate discussion. Having disposed of the idea that a word can have "music" which is independent of its meaning, Eliot goes on to offer a definition of verbal music:

> The music of a word is, so to speak, at a point of intersection: it arises from its relation first to the words immediately preceding and following it, and indefinitely to the rest of its context; and from another relation, that of its immediate meaning in that context to all the other meanings which it has had in other contexts, to its greater or less wealth of association. Not all words, obviously, are equally rich and well-connected: it is part of the business of the poet to dispose the richer among the poorer, at the right points, and we cannot afford to load a poem too heavily with the former—for it is only at certain moments that a word can be made to insinuate the whole history of a language and a civilisation. This is an "allusiveness" which is not the fashion or eccentricity of a peculiar type of poetry; but an allusiveness which is in the nature of words, and which is equally the concern of every kind of poet.

Here is a convenient starting-point. All poetry is "allusive," whether the poet intends it to be so or not; to be allusive is not simply to drop learned hints (though the poet may, like Milton or like Eliot himself, be constrained by other needs to drop these hints); the mere act of using any human language is to be allusive, because words have their own biography and this biography is implied when we use them meaningfully. To use a language well is therefore a matter of controlling this power of implication. We cannot release it unwittingly like a child playing with switches in a power-house, for "it is only at certain moments that a word can be made to insinuate the whole history of a language and a civilisation," and we must, if we are to be poets, recognise these moments and take advantage of them. A long way, this, from the entranced selection of "cadences"!

To dispose one's language so that richer words take their place among poorer words and vitalise them: this is the poet's task which Eliot speaks of in *Little Gidding*:

> *Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us*
> *To purify the dialect of the tribe*
> *And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight...*

It is "speech," not the pressure of any system of ideas that longs to communicate itself and make converts, but the fundamental human need for utterance, that "impels" the poet to purify the language of the tribe—to cultivate, that is, a sense of responsibility towards the *nuances* of meaning latent in the words he uses. This involves awareness of social and historical forces, in that it automatically "urges the mind to aftersight and foresight"; without such aftersight and foresight, one cannot use language at the level of poetic utterance at all. Two things follow from this: that we must continue to accept the traditional view of the poet as a learned man who makes use of his learning—though that learning need not, of course, be the systematised professional learning of the scholar; and, secondly, that we must continue to resist the varnished vulgarity of those who use the supreme lines of great poetry as a basis for epigrams. Any currency can be devalued, and the greatest and most solemn words of a poet may become trivial after sufficient pawing by ad-men and by those men of letters who see nothing in great literature except a vehicle for their own smartness.

In "The Music of Poetry," Eliot makes a considered rejection of purely aesthetic grounds of choice between one word and another—whatever such a "purely aesthetic" choice would be. He lays down firmly the principle that what distinguishes one word from another, makes it more or less "beautiful," is the richness of meaning, the delicacy of the balance of implications, the resonance of felt life, contained in it. All this is impersonal; it is not projected into the language by the poet, but perceived and drawn out by him. The act of poetic creation is therefore a matter of releasing the latent energies contained within the language, rather than rushing forward, grabbing the language in a powerful pair of fists, and twisting it into the required shape. As Eliot sees it, poetry is an art requiring stillness and obedience: obedience to the anonymous forces which, long before we appeared on the scene, embodied themselves in the language we employ. It also, necessarily, involves the historical sense; and right at the beginning, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot pinned down what he personally meant by that term:

> This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.

ELIOT's own "acute consciousness of his place in time" is the key to his work. He began as a rebel against literary convention, attracting a following among the young and temperamentally rebellious, whom he later disconcerted by coming out strongly in support of the traditional, the ordered, and (as many of these alienated followers wailed) the reactionary.

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In "The Music of Poetry," Eliot stresses that the task which confronts a poet is determined very largely by the position in time in which he finds himself.

> At some periods, the task is to explore the musical possibilities of an established convention of the relation of the idiom of verse to that of speech; at other periods, the task is to catch up with the changes in colloquial speech, which are fundamentally changes in thought and sensibility. This cyclical movement also has a very great influence upon our critical judgment. At a time like ours, when a refreshment of poetic diction similar to that brought about by Wordsworth had been called for (whether it has been satisfactorily accomplished or not) we are inclined, in our judgments upon the past, to exaggerate the importance of the innovators at the expense of the reputation of the developers.

Shakespeare, Eliot goes on to say, performed both these tasks in succession; to begin with, he adapted an artificial form to colloquial speech, a process which culminated in the complete mastery of colloquial-poetic effect in *Antony and Cleopatra*; thereafter, he elaborated his language, seeing how far its music could be refined and complicated without losing its hold on the colloquial.

In all this, Eliot was coming as near as he ever came to offering an account of his own work and the motives behind it. Most people, in the arts or outside them, who take up a "revolutionary" stance do so because of pressures within their own personalities; they enjoy being in opposition, they see themselves as the apostles of a fierce freedom, noble savages in a conformist world. Similarly, the defenders of tradition dramatise themselves as the doughty guards of a civilisation menaced by ignorant armies. The truly dedicated man has no time for such easy figments. Eliot, in the course of his working life, followed the pattern that he attributes to Shakespeare; up to about 1930 his work was iconoclastic in relation to the English poetic tradition; thereafter, having lived to see the establishment of a recognised idiom of modern poetry in every European language, he turned inwards, so to speak, and began to refine and at the same time, deepen his harmonies. The still music of the *Four Quartets* is a logical development—the only logical development—from the vibrant syncopations of *Prufrock* and *The Waste Land*.

From first to last, Eliot's poetic effort was to obey the genius of the English language, to do what that genius required him to do at a given point in time. When he began, English poetry needed above all else a revitalisation of its forms and an injection of new interests, new subject-matter, new energy from the larger world it had increasingly come to exclude. This meant that the ground had first to be cleared. By the time he came to write *Ash Wednesday*, the need for dismantling was over and it was time to build.

He built. The first generation of his followers, nonplussed by the cessation of that early guerrilla phase, never again believed in him so wholeheartedly; within a few years of the publication of *Ash Wednesday* the mass allegiance of the young had been quietly transferred from Eliot to Auden. The whisper began, and has since grown louder and swollen to something like a roar, that Eliot was a lost leader, a pioneer who had returned to suburban comforts, a challenger who had ceased to challenge. This belief was absurd; but we must not too harshly blame those who held (and still hold) it. They wanted a poet who would be a guerrilla leader, a permanent ally for those anxious to defy conventions. When Eliot proved to be interested in nothing so simple, but to be dedicated to his art and to those things from which his art flowered and to which it returned again, they were naturally bewildered. For to the populace a dedicated artist is, and will always remain, an impenetrable mystery.

John Wain

Letter from Paris

Crushing a Butterfly

The best thing about the recent meeting at the *Mutualité* was the Young Communist student leaders wearing red arm bands or bits of red silk ribbon, like happy novices in some religious order at the annual Prize Day. Glowing with pleasure or pale with responsibility, these boys and girls showed extraordinary discipline, cheerfulness, and patience in handling the crowds, mostly their contemporaries, though there were parents and grandparents present in the front "honorary" rows. Two giant Christmas trees on either side of the platform struck the festive, family note. The crowd was a model child too, obedient to instructions, attentive to the speakers. The occasional boos and hisses were in the festal spirit—a form of

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sardonic applause accorded the enemy for his courage or simply for his long-windedness. No speaker was prevented from continuing. I do not think a meeting of this kind would have been so orderly and good-natured in the United States, though it is impossible, really, to imagine a parallel there, since a meeting on the topic of *What Can Literature Do?* would not have been attended by four thousand young people, even if the fire laws would have allowed it in a hall the size of the *Mutualité*.

These Parisian students expected something from this panel. Not just words, but a word—*un verbe*, as an angry man shouted from the floor at the end of the meeting. They did not get it, and least of all from Jean-Paul Sartre, whose words they had come to hang on. "*Ce sont les écrivains reactionnaires de gauche*," a tall boy explained to his companion as they walked into a café after the meeting had ended, at one-thirty in the morning. I think he meant all of them, not just the defenders of the *nouveau roman*. For the students, the meeting was a sell, though it more than accomplished its purpose—to raise funds for *Clarté*, the left-wing youth publication.

The question posed was not faced with any candour except by two speakers: the novelist Jorge Semprun, a member of the Communist Party, and Jean Ricardou, a delegate, roughly speaking, from the party of the *nouveau roman*. Semprun said, in essence, that what literature can do is tell the truth; this is its political and social function. He cited Solzhenitsyn's *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. There could be no real de-Stalinisation unless the truth were told and continued to be told about Soviet life by Soviet writers. He did not accept the excuse that Soviet writers in the Stalin period "did not know" what was going on in the concentration camps, any more than he accepted the excuse when it came from Germans who "had not known" about Auschwitz. This was a plain, blunt answer to the question and a bold one. To vow to tell the truth, whether pleasing to the authorities or to your readers, is genuine literary commitment. I myself do not know of any other kind. Moreover, it is not a twentieth-century discovery. It is at least as old as Socrates.

Ricardou's handling of the question had something Socratic about it too, including a certain mischievousness, which he showed in sounding and tapping the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre. Briefly, Ricardou's answer was that what literature can do is to interrogate the world by submitting it to the test of language. Language, for the maker of fictions, is not a vehicle for conveying messages to the public; it secretes, if you will, a message or messages in its own structures. To weigh literature in the balance with hunger is the old Art-for-Art's sake formula, today turned inside out. That is, Des Esseintes might say "Art is more important than a child's dying from hunger," while Sartre says "A child's dying from hunger is more important than art." In either case, it is like saying: Commit yourself; choose between pears and yellow. Language cannot be opposed in a scale of values to man, since language *is* man. In a world without language, *i.e.*, without literature, a child's dying from hunger could have no meaning. This required courage to say, not only intellectual courage but moral courage, before the massed audience of the *Mutualité*.

THE REST OF THE EVENING was a series of evasions, sometimes executed with a witty sleight-of-hand, sometimes concealed in platitudes, sometimes brazenly posturing. Yves Berger insisted that life was horrible and that literature could do nothing, *nothing* but give the reader surcease in the form of a taste of death. This took not courage but foolhardiness; he was booed, and one had the impression that he wanted to be booed, planned to be booed, offered his martyred face and lachrymose voice to the audience in the personally selected character of the scapegoat. Jean-Pierre Faye had some witty remarks to make about a *nouveau roman* of the sixteenth century and the *"roman"* of Hegel, but he finished in semantic trifling. Simone de Beauvoir, sounding like a smiling, sharp school principal, read an existentialist lesson mixed with ordinary school-teacher's commonplaces. Literature communicates a "vision of life." It is a remedy for solitude. It allows you to live in someone else's world. In one sense, she said, all writing was committed, whether the writer intended it or not, but there was passive commitment and active commitment. The bad, passive kind was when the writer shut himself up in his ivory tower. She did not really say what the good kind was. The audience applauded fervently, possibly because it was hearing familiar words.

Sartre gave an exhibition of dialectics. He was in good form when dealing with the mortuary remarks of Yves Berger and with the labyrinthine "freedom" Michel Butor claims to offer his readers. And he had, as usual in his writings, a surprise opening gambit. The others had

THIS report of a recent Paris meeting on "What Can Literature Do?" was originally written for a French weekly on the Left, and then submitted to a French weekly on the Right, both of which found it "too strong" for publication. Miss McCarthy is currently living in Paris.

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talked about the *writer*; he, more democratic, would talk about the *reader*. For the advocates of "pure" literature, the reader was only a means, the work of art being an end in itself. For Sartre, he explained, the reader was an end, since the aim of literature was communication. Furthermore, the Sartrian reader is not just an end or target; he is the author's better half, his collaborator. When the author pauses to seek the right word, he is putting himself in the position of the reader. Thus the reader is joint author, since the author is joint reader.

This, in my opinion, was clever demagogy, whose effect was to alert and flatter a mass of four thousand young readers who had not known, until then, that they were creative. It is true that the author not only writes his work but reads it as he writes. However, the reader or listener in the author is not the same as the real reader—unfortunately. The reader in the author is the *ideal* reader, not the sum of future readers, many of whom will misunderstand the author's words, just as in several instances that night the audience misunderstood the words of Ricardou. Perhaps literary greatness consists in the power to force the reader to hear the text as it sounded in the author's ears, with all the inflections falling in the right place; this is evident in poetry where the play of rhythm and tonalities against metre makes it harder for the reader to read wrong. But this is the reverse of the reader's "liberty" as described by Sartre the other night. In fact, the greater the author, the more the reader is held in thrall; he is dominated and subjugated by the author. Hence such expressions as "A powerful writer," "I could not put it down," "I was enthralled," etc. More correctly, he is subjugated by the author's fictions; I agree with Ricardou. Besides, the author, when he looks for the right word, is not, in my experience, looking for the right coin to put into the slot, which will then ring a bell at the reader's end of the line; he is asking language to tell him what he intends to say. Even when he has found the word, *he* may not know; the *word* knows.

Even more disappointing was Sartre's sudden drop into the commonplace when he settled down to deal with the question proposed for the debate. The French existentialist vocabulary (this was noticeable with Simone de Beauvoir too) fails at just the point where existentialism claims superiority over other philosophies: in making a junction with life. What can literature do? Sartre replied with a vague truism: it can "make sense of his life" for the reader. All right, but how? Sartre did not say, just as Simone de Beauvoir did not say, what committed literature was and how you were supposed to recognise it or be helped by it. She recognised a new work, she said at one point, by a tone in its voice. But this is the case with all literature. Either "committed literature" is just a new name for literature and hence a tautology or it is a brand name for some special product that Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir were unwilling to define. Why? This evasiveness was all the more peculiar in that she spoke with an air of nervous bravery and he with an air of dogmatic intransigence. As though they were facing lions. But *they* were the lions; the audience was roaring with them. At least at the beginning. When Sartre had finished, the clapping, for the first time, was feeble. Yet he could not have been hissed or booed, because he had not said anything to provoke a reaction.

Sartre in his role of shocker, of a "diabolical" intelligence, found himself in an uncomfortable situation. It was the others, the defenders of "pure" literature, who shocked and sometimes amused the youth—particularly Ricardou, with his mop of dark curling hair, round, simple face, and strange dark glasses. One of the charms of youth is that it is attracted to a minority, and Sartre knows that. You cannot be a minority and in the majority simultaneously, and this is the current dilemma of Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in France. Moreover, to bait the *nouveau roman*, which is mainly a youth fashion, is not as easy as baiting the "bourgeois" of the Nobel Prize Committee. It is like rending black open-work stockings or crushing a butterfly.

Yet to admit that the *nouveau roman* is a fad would be to admit that there was no adversary —hence no debate, at any rate on a literary level. Unless the *nouveau roman* is only the shadow adversary and the real enemy remains unnamed, just as "committed literature" itself sometimes appears to be an alias or pseudonym for something unmentioned.

Mary McCarthy

Pop Cinema?

The London Film Festival is not a particularly exciting affair. Most of the pictures have won awards at one of the half-dozen or so Continental festivals and arrive in London rather like world champions in town for an exhibition bout. There are thus few surprises and the customary reception is a sort of approbatory silence. But this general tone of intelligence and high seriousness reflects the good taste of the organisers rather than the smug audiences, who rarely have to face up to the

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task of passing an original judgment on something new. When they are forced to do so the result is often lamentable—as those who attended either of the showings of Alfred Leslie's *The Last Clean Shirt* can testify.

As I wasn't in Paris for the première of *L'Age d'Or* (and have never attended a 14th Army reunion where they showed *Objective Burma*), I have no experience with which to compare it. For the half-hour that the movie ran the complacent mood of the audience was shattered—they booed, groaned, stamped their feet, and finally resorted to the slow hand-clap. The reception I gather was much the same at the New York Festival where it was shown earlier. The New York critics who bothered to mention it at all did so merely to record that it was both the most unpopular picture exhibited and the worst. (The one exception was Philip T. Hartung, who wrote a favourable notice in *Commonweal*.) Their British counterparts totally disregarded it, though few of them actually attend public performances of pictures and they may well not have seen it.

In point of fact, *The Last Clean Shirt* was one of the two most original films shown in the London Festival (the other one being Jean-Luc Godard's *Bande A Part*). Curiously enough, Leslie's earlier movie, *Pull My Daisy* (1959), an improvised impression of New York "Beat" life, proved very popular at the National Film Theatre, though it was more obviously experimental.

The Last Clean Shirt does not look like a vanguard movie in the way that the so-called *avant-garde* movies of the 1920s still do. It has something of the initially deceptive qualities of Jasper Johns' flags and targets. Indeed one might say that the development of Leslie's own painting from abstract expressionism towards "pop" art defines the difference between the brash spontaneity of *Pull My Daisy* and the cool, considered character of *The Last Clean Shirt*. If the complex texture of the former conceals a basic simplicity of concept, in the letter the reverse is the case, an apparent simplicity conceals a conceptual infrastructure of peculiar complexity.

The picture is in three parts, each lasting a little more than ten minutes which we actually see ticking by. A Negro steps into the driving seat of a convertible and attaches a clock registering 12 noon above the dashboard. A white woman takes the seat beside him. The camera remains fixed at the back of the car while they go for a ten-minute drive around New York. The woman keeps up an endless chatter in an unintelligible and clearly invented foreign language, and the man sits listening, occasionally nodding or smiling. The camera only changes position once when the car stops at a traffic light and for a minute it is reversed as the couple back into the space which they originally left. Apart from the woman's ceaseless talk the only other speech on the sound-track is a brief quotation from the burial service ("ashes to ashes...") which might be coming from a nearby church, and at the end a breezy folk-song about putting "my last clean shirt on my brother Bill...."

The film is then repeated *in toto*, only now it carries sub-titles translating what the woman is saying—an egocentric mixture of gossip and high-flown speculation about the nature of life. At the end of this we get the same film yet again, only this time the sub-titles tell us what is going on in the man's head while his passenger is talking away. What he is thinking about is expressed in a stream of consciousness of free verse, acid comment on the woman's garrulousness, recollection of old movies, and at the end, when the folk singer gets going for the third time, he questions the wisdom of Leslie's inclusion of the song. (Throughout we are reminded that he is "thinking" and still thinking.) When this is over the movie really does end with the credits.

IT IS APPARENT, I think, just from this description that the picture is compounded of several elements—a "pop" art triptych, a joke about pretentious, "significant" movies, an inquiry into the nature of cinematic truth, an examination of the response to the contemporary cinema. This is clearly confirmed in two other aspects of the picture. Each of the sections is preceded by a parody of those dreary company trademarks that precede most foreign language movies. While this is on the screen a woman's voice sings James Russell Lowell's hymn with the salient words *"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,/In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side."* If this were not enough warning to the audience, she is singing in the face of a high wind, and at the end of the second section in anticipation of the audience's reaction there is loud applause dubbed on to the sound-track.

At the level of parody the film's effectiveness is obvious, and to my mind hilarious; but this is also related to the other levels at which it operates. (There seems, too, to be an element of self-parody, for a few years back Leslie wrote a play, *The Chekhov Cha-Cha*, in which a girl drives a painter around town and listens to his non-stop monologue in which he voices Leslie's well-known saying, "What I hate is ideas as programmes.") By pursuing boredom to its farthest reaches a strange exhilaration can result, and there is no reason why the picture could not have continued with other verbal

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modifications of the same visuals. The movement of the man from reaction to the woman to comment on the film itself suggests further variants, such as a discussion between the producer and director, what the woman is thinking about the man's response, etc. For what we are seeing is a series of different movies, quite as different and more subtle than those of, say, *Rashomon*, or other films which tell the same story from different viewpoints. Where in *Rashomon* one has a number of subjective stories that are related to an assumed objective situation, in *The Last Clean Shirt* there is an objective situation recurring, the nature of which is completely changed by the sub-titles.

Furthermore, the point is not merely the obvious one that with sub-titles you have a diminished or distorted understanding of the picture, but rather that however complete or skilful the translation they actually change the visual meaning of the picture. This apparent aid to comprehension, an involvement through understanding, has the effect not merely of distraction but of emphasising the plane of the film and of the screen, insisting upon the two-dimensionality. The sub-titles become *part* of the film, turning it into a more aesthetic object. (They also increase our awareness of the properties that all movies have but which are usually concealed. One might consider here the effect of the titling of silent films, the time-and-place labelling that was once a feature of Hollywood historical pictures, now only employed for "documentary" purposes, and the deliberate use for alienation of chapter-headings in Godard's *Vivre Sa Vie*.) Then again, sub-titles force us to realise that the nature of the experience has been changed even if we understand either or both the language spoken and the language of the sub-titles. One also has quite different responses to an ordinary still and a still photograph cut from the frame and retaining a sub-title.

These are just a few of the issues raised by this picture, and one could use it as the basis for an inquiry into the fundamental problems that underlie most discussions of the nature of the movie experience. These are not of course new problems, and they are ones to which an increasing number of younger American and British painters have been addressing themselves. It is unusual though to discover them being examined in such a fascinating way in the movies.

It might be considered a mark of the insensitivity of the intellectual movie audiences in London and New York that they did not respond more intelligently to *The Last Clean Shirt*. On the other hand their reaction was clearly the one that Alfred Leslie and his collaborator Frank O'Hara anticipated. And for this reason one supposes that the picture is unlikely to be shown widely, and maybe not at all, which is a pity. Still, as a critic said to me after seeing some of the London notices of the Jasper Johns' retrospective: "The old reactionary spirit is still there and it's good to see that something can still bring it to the surface. . . ."

Philip French

A Valedictory

By Lionel Trilling

THE VALEDICTORY ADDRESS, as it has developed in American colleges and universities over the years, has become a very strict form, a literary *genre* which permits very little deviation. We all know what its procedure is. The chosen graduate begins with a conspectus of the world into which he and his classmates are now about to enter. His view of the world is not calculated to inspire cheer, it is usually pretty grim. He speaks of the disorder and violence that prevail in the world, perhaps even close to home. He speaks of the moral and intellectual inadequacy of society, of the dominance of personal self-interest, of indifference to the welfare of others and to all ideal considerations. This constitutes the first movement of the valedictory form.

In the second movement the speaker turns his attention to the graduating class in whose name he is saying farewell to their college. He remarks on the sheltered life which the members of the class have been privileged to enjoy for four years. He speaks of the intellectual and spiritual ideals which have been instilled into

LIONEL TRILLING, *who is at present the George Eastman Visiting Professor at Oxford, originally gave this text as the "valedictorian" of the recipients of honorary degrees at Northwestern University.*

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them and goes on to observe how these will be denied and assailed by that harsh world which is now to be the scene of their new endeavours. And then, in a concluding movement, the speaker urges his fellow graduates to hold fast to the virtues of the educated man and to try to exercise them in the hostile world which, in the degree that it opposes them, has need of them.

In short, the defining characteristic of the valedictory address is its statement of the opposition between the university on the one hand and the world on the other.

How WELL WE KNOW this opposition! For the academic person it may constitute a chief element of his sense of himself and of his position in society. It is charged with a most moving pathos from which the academic man may derive justification and courage. Surely no academic has ever failed to take heart from Matthew Arnold's famous apostrophe to his own university, of which the opposition is of the essence.

"Adorable dreamer," says Arnold to Oxford —"adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who has given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and to heroes not mine, only never to the Philistine! home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties! what example could ever so inspire us to keep down the Philistine in ourselves, what teacher could ever so save us from that bondage to which we are all prone... the bondage of"—and here Arnold quotes Goethe— —"'*was uns alle bändigt,* DAS GEMEINE'": what binds us all, the narrow, the mundane, the merely practical.

This was, in point of fact, Arnold's actual valedictory to Oxford when he had concluded his term as Professor of Poetry at the university, and it contains the whole *mystique* of the valedictory: it gives ultimate expression to the idea of the opposition between the purity and gentle nobility of the university set over against the crassness of the world.

And what is a designated valedictorian to do if he finds that he cannot accept this established valedictory *mystique*? I am in just that situation. For some years now, it has seemed to me that the opposition between the university and the world, or at least half the world, is diminishing at a very rapid rate. Gone are the days when H. L. Mencken could laugh a book out of court by referring to its author as Professor, or Dr., or, worst of all, *Herr Professor Dr.* Gone are the days when middle-class fathers groaned and middle-class mothers wept when their sons announced their intention of making a career in the university—scholarship and teaching now appear to the parental mind as amounting to a profession like another, and throughout the land we hear the low purr of satisfaction that accompanies reference to "my son, the one who's abroad on a Fulbright," "my son, the one who's working on genes."

PERHAPS THERE IS no more striking fact in American social life to-day than the rapid upward social mobility of our academic personnel, the upward movement of the university itself in national esteem. If ever the university was the object of condescension as the place where abstraction consorted most happily with incompetence, it is now, perhaps more than any other American institution, an object of admiring interest and even of desire, as suggesting the possibility of a life of reason and order. I have the sense that the authority the university has over people's minds grows constantly. No less constant is the increase of the university's scope—it seems to be a chief characteristic of our American culture that virtually any aspect of human life can be thought of as an object of study, and that eventually the intellectual discipline that develops around it seeks to find shelter in the university. Nothing is too mundane, nothing is too instinctual, nothing is too spiritual for the university to deal with.

What is a valedictorian to do? How is he to evoke the appropriate valedictory pathos of the opposition that the world shows to the university when so much of the world is trying to crowd itself into the university? And he is the more debarred from the valedictory *mystique* and pathos if his own impression of the state of affairs is supplemented by a reading of Clark Kerr's recent book, *The Uses of the University*. Dr. Kerr is president of the University of California and thus speaks with no small authority about university affairs. He tells us that we are witnessing a *rapprochement* of ever-increasing intimacy between the university and the world.

But this puts it all too mildly. How far things have gone in this new direction is strikingly suggested by Dr. Kerr's statement—it is the statement not only of a university president but of a distinguished economist—that the university has become one of the decisive economic facts of our society. Dr. Kerr speaks of the university as being at the centre of what he calls "the knowledge industry," and he is not using a mere figure of speech when he makes that phrase. He does not mean that the university's activity and organisation may be thought of as in some ways analogous to the activity and organisation of a manufacturing or a processing industry. Nor does he mean that the knowledge that universities develop is a commodity which business men are eager to possess.

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He means that the existence of our universities bears a relation to the national economy that is materially comparable to those enterprises whose achievements are noted in the Dow-Jones averages. He tells us that "the production, distribution, and consumption of 'knowledge' in all forms is said to account for 29 per cent of gross national product . . . ; and knowledge production is growing at about twice the rate of the rest of the economy." And he goes on:

> What the railroads did for the second half of the last century and the automobile for the first half of this century may be done for the second half of this century by the knowledge industry: that is, to serve as the focal point of national growth. And the university is at the centre of the knowledge process.

Adorable dreamer!—is it this that you were dreaming about all these years: that some day you would "serve as the focal point for national growth"? That so much power could come into your hands?—for economic strength implies political power, and the end of your new economic strength is not yet in sight. Consider Dr. Kerr's plans for the new campus at La Jolla, where a new college to accommodate 2,500 students is to be organised and built every two years for the next twenty years: project these plans sufficiently far into the future and it becomes plain that the Governorship of California will be a mere honorary office, all real authority lying with the President of the University. Push the project yet a little further and we envisage the day when the President of the United States will call his cabinet together and will meet with the Dean of State, the Dean of Defence, the Dean of the Interior, when the Federal office commanding the greatest patronage will not be that of Postmaster-General but that of Director of Admissions.

IT IS A SPLENDID VISION. We have always said that knowledge is power, and maybe this is going to turn out to be true. The idea of Philosopher-Kings has always haunted the academic mind and perhaps, on Dr. Kerr's showing, we are now on the point of ushering in their reign. And is it not characteristic of an American dream that Dr. Kerr, conceiving a city of the mind, should be so much more catholic, tolerant, and inclusive than Plato?—Dr. Kerr tells us that the fully developed university of the future, which he calls Ideopolis, so far from excluding the poets, as Plato did from his Republic, must find an honoured place for all the creative arts. Dr. Kerr speaks of the creative arts as being "hitherto the ugly ducklings or Cinderellas of the academic world," but he is confident that this is a condition which is now to be changed.

> America [Dr. Kerr says] is bursting with creativity in painting, music, literature, the theatre, with a vigour equalled in few parts of the world today. Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Russia, England, the Low Countries have had great periods of cultural flowering. America is having one now. . . . The universities need to find ways . . . to accommodate pure creative effort if they are also to have places on stage as well as in the wings and in the audience in the great drama of cultural growth now playing on the American stage.

Let us not stop to question Dr. Kerr's belief that the university *should* be on-stage "in the great drama of cultural growth"—let us only investigate what the university must do to "accommodate pure creative effort" in the arts, giving our fullest attention to literature. Let us appoint a Committee for the purpose, and endow it with very considerable powers, of which one is that of choosing its personnel from among the illustrious dead if it wishes to do so, of which another is that of considering the candidate at any point in his career it elects.

And let us suppose the Committee to be a Committee of the faculty of Northwestern University—then, without question, because of the superb biography by their colleague, Professor Richard Ellman, the members will think first of James Joyce as an especially impressive example of pure creative effort. The committee considers Mr. Joyce at that moment in his career when he has as yet published only *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, but is on the point of bringing out *Ulysses*. The members are reassured by Mr. Joyce's academic attainments —he commands several romance languages, has a working knowledge of the Scandinavian tongues, and a strong interest in linguistics; he is adept in Scholastic philosophy, gives signs of being a powerful theorist of aesthetics. The Committee doesn't want to interfere with his writing, but it can't help thinking that, in addition to carrying on his pure creative effort, Mr. Joyce might well turn out to be useful in interdisciplinary seminars.

BUT THERE ARE CERTAIN personal circumstances which raise questions. One circumstance is that Mr. Joyce is not married to Mrs. Joyce. Maybe in spirit but not in church and not in law. Then there is the probability that Mrs. Joyce will not be happy in an academic community—she is a lady (but not actually a *lady*) of very simple education; so far from being of use to her husband in his work, like a proper academic wife, she never reads what he writes. Mr. Joyce makes inordinate demands on everyone around him, is never grateful for what people do for him, believes that he is the object of treachery, even of conspiracy. He drinks too much. It is an

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aspect of his pure creative effort that he portrays actual people, including his literary colleagues, usually satirically, and using their actual names. The chances are that he will make no exception of his academic colleagues. Is this good for faculty morale? The new book he is writing, the one that is to be called *Ulysses,* is said to be a work of genius. But it is full of indecent words and scatological and sexual details. It is going to be prosecuted, condemned, burned. Early readers, even very intelligent ones, will find it harsh and cruel. To be sure, with the passing decades, nobody will be troubled by its outspokenness, and the judgment of harshness and cruelty will yield to the opinion that this is a sweet, kind, tender book, almost to the point of sentimentality. But does the university want to accommodate the decades of scandal it will cause?

With great reluctance the Committee decides against Mr. Joyce and turns its attention to another great creative personality. This one is also salient in Northwestern consciousness—it is Professor Erich Heller's "ironic German," Thomas Mann. He, too, is not only creative but learned—he is encyclopaedic in science, psychology, history, Egyptology, musicology. He is probably the world's leading authority on the work and personality of Thomas Mann—nothing would please him more than to give a course of lectures or a seminar on the development of this genius. His aptness for the academic life is suggested by his fondness for being known as *Dr.* Mann. It is pleasing to note that there can be no doubt that Dr. Mann is married to Frau Dr. Mann. No lives could be more orderly than theirs. In short, everything makes it clear that Dr. Mann should be recommended for appointment. The Committee moves fast, the Deans move fast, the President moves fast, the Trustees move fast—alas, to no avail: Harvard has got to him first. What is more, the University of California is after Dr. Mann, and is likely to snatch him from Harvard itself, for California plans to create a Mann-Goethe Institute which will be an exact replica of Weimar in 1775.

Disappointed but hopeful, the Committee turns to André Gide, an eventual Nobel Prize Winner. There can be no doubt about it: Monsieur Gide is married to Madame Gide. And yet—alas! . . . It is not that the Committee wishes to exclude sexual deviants from academic life; they have been there before. But Monsieur Gide insists on making a point of it, he defends it, he urges it. What is more, he represents the family as a malevolent institution. Who would deny his right to take these positions, yet should they be taken with the university as the forum? The parents of our students cannot be wholly left out of account.

But all these adverse considerations are in a sense irrelevant. For it turns out that Monsieur Gide would not accept the appointment even if it were offered him. For he conceives it to be of the essence of his existence as a writer that he startle and shock and dismay his readers. He cannot help entertaining the idea that the university is an institution, that it is by nature conservative, although not necessarily in any bad sense of that word, and respectable, in whatever sense may be attached to *that* word, and that if his writings were to issue from the university, they would seem certified as virtuous, they would lose much—perhaps all—of their shocking force.

If not Gide, then certainly not Genet. Anyway, with his prison record he would have difficulty with the immigration authorities.

What of Jean-Paul Sartre, not only eminent as a creative but as a speculative mind? We are large-minded enough to overlook his sometimes rather odd political positions and also *his* antagonism to respectable life. But Monsieur Sartre does not want to come to us. He likes to do his writing at a table in a café. Very well, this is one of the ways the university can accommodate creative effort—we will have a café; we need one anyway; we will engage Philip Johnson or Mies van der Rohe to build one as an annex to the student Union. Monsieur Sartre is touched, but still says no thank you. It isn't only the café, it is all of Paris: all that noise, all that distraction, all those political quarrels—how is a man to write without them?

William Butler Yeats, when approached, returns something of the same answer. Ireland is wearing him out, tries his temper, frays his nerves. The Irish nation disgusts and infuriates him. How can he leave it? Not to mention the great houses, and the beautiful great ladies, and unforgivable England, and the language. How can the university possibly accommodate *these* necessities of Mr. Yeats' creative efforts? Rather to the relief of the Department of History, which was apprehensive that Mr. Yeats might wish to give a course on his theory of history as set forth in *A Vision*, a work which had been dictated to his wife by certain spirits whose academic background is quite vague, Mr. Yeats declines the offer.

The Committee thinks that perhaps its century is wrong. It tries the nineteenth. Dostoevsky? A genius, but his political views are not easily accommodated by a liberal university. A genius, but an utterly impossible person. Count Leo Tolstoy? Without doubt he is married to the Countess, but he is just on the point of his religious conversion and there is trouble in the

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offing. Charles Dickens? Doesn't want to leave London and young Ellen Ternan.

PERHAPS, then, the art is wrong?—Cézanne stares when the Committee approaches him. Why, in the name of everything rational, should he want to leave these old hot southern rocks? As for apples, tablecloths, pitchers, he can find plenty here at home—what need for a university? What would he do there that he does not do here?—he paints and he paints and he paints: what else *is* there to do? Beethoven (a most deficient and maladjusted person—another *impossible* person) replies with a titanic stare, growl, and shrug. It occurs to both of them to ask, in a moment of terrifying geniality, what the Committee means by its talk of *pure creative effort*. "Pure, pure; creative, creative," they say, "what *blague*, what *Quatsch* is this?—we are not making pure creative efforts: we are telling you God's truth." Sometimes, it appears, genius is touched with paranoia. Alas.

Our Committee retires to think things over. Like any Committee, ours will not admit that it has failed. It reports some strange, deeply ingrained resistance of the artists to the university, a resistance that is not to be in the least diminished by all that they are told about a new function the university has, which is that of serving as "the focal point of national growth." Like any Committee, ours looks to the future, to the time when the universities will have discovered the way to rear up a new generation of artists who will be trained to find it possible to accommodate themselves to the accommodation of pure creative effort in the arts that the university will devise.

Unreal Estates

On Science Fiction — C. S. Lewis, Kingsley Amis, Brian Aldiss

ALDISS: One thing that the three of us have in common is that we have all had stories published in the *Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, some of them pretty far-flung stories. I take it we would all agree that one of the attractions of *S.F.* is that it takes us to unknown places.

AMIS: Swift, if he were writing to-day, would have to take us out to the planets, wouldn't he? Now that most of our terra incognita is—real estate.

ALDISS: There is a lot of the eighteenth-century equivalent of *S.F.* which is placed in Australia or similar unreal estates.

SHORTLY *before his recent death, Professor C. S. Lewis recorded a discussion in his rooms at Magdalene College, Cambridge, with Kingsley Amis and Brian Aldiss, on science fiction. Lewis was himself, in addition to his critical and theological work, the author of a number of imaginative tales:* Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, That Hideous Strength, *among others. Amis, besides his novels* (Lucky Jim, One Fat Englishman, *etc.*), *has written a study of science fiction,* New Maps of Hell (*now available as a Pan Pocket Book, 2s. 6d*), *and has co-edited three anthologies of science-fiction stories. Aldiss is the editor of three Penguin Science Fiction anthologies and author of many science fiction novels and short stories.*

LEWIS: Exactly: Peter Wilkins and all that. By the way, is anyone ever going to do a translation of Kepler's *Somnium*?

AMIS: Groff Conklin told me he had read the book; I think it must exist in translation. But may we talk about the worlds you created? You chose the science fiction medium because you wanted to go to strange places? I remember with respectful and amused admiration your account of the space drive in *Out of the Silent Planet*. When Ransome and his friend get into the spaceship he says "How does this ship work?" and the man says "It operates by using some of the lesser known properties of—," what was it?

LEWIS: Solar radiation. Ransome was reporting words without a meaning to him, which is what a layman gets when he asks for a scientific explanation. Obviously it was vague, because I'm no scientist and not interested in the purely technical side of it.

ALDISS: It's almost a quarter of a century since you wrote that first novel of the trilogy.

LEWIS: Have I been a prophet?

ALDISS: You have to a certain extent; at least, the idea of vessels propelled by solar radiation is back in favour again. Cordwainer Smith used it poetically, James Blish tried to use it technically in *The Star Dwellers*.

LEWIS: In my case it was pure mumbo-jumbo, and perhaps meant primarily to convince me.

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AMIS: Obviously when one deals with isolated planets or isolated islands one does this for a certain purpose. A setting in contemporary London or a London of the future couldn't provide one with the same isolation and the heightening of consciousness it engenders.

LEWIS: The starting point of the second novel, *Perelandra,* was my mental picture of the floating islands. The whole of the rest of my labours in a sense consisted of building up a world in which floating islands could exist. And then of course the story about an averted fall developed. This is because, as you know, having got your people to this exciting country, something must happen.

AMIS: That frequently taxes people very much.

ALDISS: But I am surprised that you put it this way round. I would have thought that you constructed *Perelandra* for the didactic purpose.

LEWIS: Yes, everyone thinks that. They are quite wrong.

AMIS: If I may say a word on Professor Lewis' side, there was a didactic purpose of course; a lot of very interesting profound things were said, but—correct me if I'm wrong—I'd have thought a simple sense of wonder, extraordinary things going on, were the motive forces behind the creation.

LEWIS: Quite, but something has got to happen. The story of this averted fall came in very conveniently. Of course it wouldn't have been that particular story if I wasn't interested in those particular ideas on other grounds. But that isn't what I started from. I've never started from a message or a moral, have you?

AMIS: No, never. You get interested in the situation.

LEWIS: The story itself should force its moral upon you. You find out what the moral is by writing the story.

AMIS: Exactly: I think that sort of thing is true of all kinds of fiction.

ALDISS: But a lot of science fiction has been written from the other point of view: those dreary sociological dramas that appear from time to time, started with a didactic purpose—to make a preconceived point—and they've got no further.

LEWIS: I suppose Gulliver started from a straight point of view? Or did it really start because he wanted to write about a lot of big and little men?

AMIS: Possibly both, as Fielding's parody of Richardson turned into *Joseph Andrews.* A lot of science fiction loses much of the impact it could have by saying "Well, here we are on Mars, we all know where we are, and we're living in these pressure domes or whatever it is, and life is really very much like it is on earth, except there is a certain climatic difference. . . ." They accept other men's inventions rather than forge their own.

LEWIS: It's only the first journey to a new planet that is of any interest to imaginative people.

AMIS: In your reading of science fiction have you ever come across a writer who's done this properly?

LEWIS: Well, the one you probably disapprove of because he's so very unscientific is David Lindsay, in *Voyage to Arcturus.* It's a remarkable thing, because scientifically it's nonsense, the style is appalling, and yet this ghastly vision comes through.

ALDISS: It didn't come through to me.

AMIS: Nor me. Still. . . . Victor Gollancz told me a very interesting remark of Lindsay's about *Arcturus*; he said, "I shall never appeal to a large public at all, but I think that as long as our civilisation lasts one person a year will read me." I respect that attitude.

LEWIS: Quite so. Modest and becoming. I also agree with something you said in a preface, I believe it was, that some science fiction really does deal with issues far more serious than those realistic fiction deals with; real problems about human destiny and so on. Do you remember that story about the man who meets a female monster landed from another planet with all its cubs hanging round it? It's obviously starving, and he offers them thing after thing to eat; they immediately vomit it up, until one of the young fastens on him, begins sucking his blood, and immediately begins to revive. This female creature is utterly unhuman, horrible in form; there's a long moment when it looks at the man—they're in a lonely place—and then very sadly it packs up its young, and goes back into its spaceship and goes away. Well now, you could not have a more serious theme than that. What is a footling story about some pair of human lovers compared with that?

AMIS: On the debit side, you often have these marvellous large themes tackled by people who haven't got the mental or moral or stylistic equipment to take them on. A reading of more recent *S.F.* shows that writers are getting more capable of tackling them. Have you read Walter Miller's *Canticle for Leibowitz*? Have you any comments on that?

LEWIS: I thought it was pretty good. I only read it once; mind you, a book's no good to me until I've read it two or three times—I'm going to read it again. It was a major work, certainly.

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AMIS: What did you think about its religious feeling?

LEWIS: It came across very well. There were bits of the actual writing which one could quarrel with, but on the whole it was well imagined and well executed.

AMIS: Have you seen James Blish's novel *A Case of Conscience*? Would you agree that to write a religious novel that isn't concerned with details of ecclesiastical practice and the numbing minutiae of history and so on, science fiction would be the natural outlet for this?

LEWIS: If you have a religion it must be cosmic; therefore it seems to me odd that this *genre* was so late in arriving.

ALDISS: It's been around without attracting critical attention for a long time; the magazines themselves have been going since 1926, although in the beginning they appealed mainly to the technical side. As Amis says, people have come along who can write, as well as think up engineering ideas.

LEWIS: We ought to have said earlier that that's quite a different species of science fiction, about which I say nothing at all; those who were really interested in the technical side of it. It's obviously perfectly legitimate if it's well done.

AMIS: The purely technical and the purely imaginative overlap, don't they?

ALDISS: There are certainly the two streams, and they often overlap, for instance in Arthur Clarke's writings. It can be a rich mixture. Then there's the type of story that's not theological, but it makes a moral point. An example is the Sheckley story about Earth being blasted by radioactivity. The survivors of the human race have gone away to another planet for about a thousand years; they come back to reclaim Earth and find it full of all sorts of gaudy armour-plated creatures, vegetation, etc. One of the party say, "We'll clear this lot out, make it habitable for man again." But in the end the decision is 'Well, we made a mess of the place when it was ours, let's get out and leave it to them." This story was written about '49, when most people hadn't starting thinking round the subject at all.

LEWIS: Yes, most of the earlier stories start from the opposite assumption that we, the human race, are in the right, and everything else is ogres. I may have done a little towards altering that, but the new point of view has come very much in. We've lost our confidence, so to speak.

AMIS: It's all terribly self-critical and self-contemplatory nowadays.

LEWIS: This is surely an enormous gain—a human gain, that people should be thinking that way.

AMIS: The prejudice of supposedly educated persons towards this type of fiction is fantastic. If you pick up a good science fiction magazine, the range of interests appealed to and I.Q.s employed is pretty amazing. It's time more people caught on. We've been telling them about it for some while.

LEWIS: Quite true. The world of serious fiction is very narrow.

AMIS: Too narrow if you want to deal with a broad theme. For instance, Philip Wylie in *The Disappearance* wants to deal with the difference between men and women in a general way, in twentieth-century society, unencumbered by local and temporary considerations; his point, as I understand it, is that men and women, shorn of their social roles, are really very much the same. Science fiction, which can presuppose a major change in our environment, is the natural medium for discussing a subject of that kind. Look at the job of dissecting human nastiness carried out in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.

LEWIS: That can't be science fiction.

AMIS: I would dissent from that. It starts off with a characteristic bit of *S.F.* situation: that World War III has begun, bombs dropped and all that....

LEWIS: Ah, well, you're now taking the German view that any romance about the future is science fiction. I'm not sure that this is a useful classification.

AMIS: "Science fiction" is such a hopelessly vague label.

LEWIS: And of course a great deal of it isn't *science* fiction. Really it's only a negative criterion: anything which is not naturalistic, which is not about what we call the real world.

ALDISS: I think we oughtn't to try to define it, because it's a self-defining thing in a way. We know where we are. You're right, though, about *Lord of the Flies*. The atmosphere is a science fiction atmosphere.

LEWIS: It was a very terrestrial island; the best island, almost, in fiction. Its actual sensuous effect on you is terrific.

ALDISS: Indeed. But it's a laboratory case—

AMIS: —isolating certain human characteristics, to see how they would work out—

LEWIS: The only trouble is that Golding writes so well. In one of his other novels, *The Inheritors*, the detail of every sensuous impression, the light on the leaves and so on, was so good that you couldn't find out what was happening. I'd say it was almost too well done. All these little details you only notice in real life if you've got a high temperature. You couldn't see the wood for the leaves.

ALDISS: You had this in *Pincher Martin*; every feeling in the rocks, when he's washed ashore, is done with a hallucinatory vividness.

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AMIS: It is, that's exactly the phrase. I think thirty years ago if you wanted to discuss a general theme you would go to the historical novel; now you would go to what I might describe in a prejudiced way as science fiction. In science fiction you can isolate the factors you want to examine. If you wanted to deal with the theme of colonialism, for instance, as Poul Anderson has done, you don't do it by writing a novel about Ghana or Pakistan—

LEWIS: Which involves you in such a mass of detail that you don't want to go into—

AMIS: You set up worlds in space which incorporate the characteristics you need.

LEWIS: Would you describe Abbot's *Flatland* as science fiction? There's so little effort to bring it into any sensuous—well, you couldn't do it, and it remains an intellectual theorem.... But probably the great work in science fiction is still to come. Futile books about the next world came before Dante, Fanny Burney came before Jane Austen, Marlowe came before Shakespeare.

AMIS: We're getting the prolegomena.

LEWIS: If only the modern highbrow critics could be induced to take it seriously....

AMIS: Do you think they ever can?

LEWIS: No, the whole present dynasty has got to die and rot before anything can be done at all.

ALDISS: Splendid!

AMIS: What's holding them up, do you think?

LEWIS: Matthew Arnold made the horrible prophecy that literature would increasingly replace religion. It has, and it's taken on all the features of bitter persecution, great intolerance, and traffic in relics. All literature becomes a sacred text. A sacred text is always exposed to the most monstrous exegesis; hence we have the spectacle of some wretched scholar taking a pure divertissement written in the seventeenth century and getting the most profound ambiguities and social criticisms out of it, which of course aren't there at all.... It's the discovery of the mare's nest by the pursuit of the red herring. This is going to go on long after my lifetime. You may be able to see the end of it, I shan't.

AMIS: You think this is so integral a part of the Establishment that people can't overcome—

LEWIS: It's an industry, you see. What would all the people be writing *D. Phil* theses on if this prop were removed?

AMIS: An instance of this mentality the other day: somebody referred to "Mr. Amis' I suspect rather affected enthusiasm for science fiction...."

LEWIS: Isn't that maddening!

AMIS: You can't really like it.

LEWIS: You must be pretending to be a plain man or something. . . . I've met the attitude again and again. You've probably reached the stage too of having theses written on yourself. I received a letter from an American examiner asking "Is it true that you meant this and this and this?" A writer of a thesis was attributing to me views which I have explicitly contradicted in the plainest possible English. They'd be much wiser to write about the dead, who can't answer.

ALDISS: In America, I think science fiction is accepted on a more responsible level.

AMIS: I'm not so sure about that, because when *Spectrum I* came out in the States we had less friendly and less understanding treatment from "serious" reviewers than we did over here.

LEWIS: I'm surprised at that, because in general all American reviewing is more friendly and generous than in England.

AMIS: People were patting themselves on the back for not understanding what we meant.

LEWIS: This extraordinary pride in being exempt from temptation that you have not yet risen to the level of! Eunuchs boasting of their chastity!

AMIS: One of my pet theories is that serious writers as yet unborn or still at school will soon regard science fiction as a natural way of writing.

LEWIS: By the way, has any science fiction writer yet succeeded in inventing a third sex? Apart from the third sex we all know.

AMIS: Clifford Simak invented a set-up where there were seven sexes.

LEWIS: How rare happy marriages must have been then!

ALDISS: Rather worth striving for perhaps.

LEWIS: Obviously when achieved they'd be wonderful.

ALDISS: I find I would much rather write science fiction than anything else. The dead weight is so much less there than in the field of the ordinary novel. There's a sense in which you're conquering a fresh country.

AMIS: Speaking as a supposedly realistic novelist, I've written little bits of science fiction and this is such a tremendous liberation.

LEWIS: Well, you're a very ill-used man; you wrote a farce and everyone thought it a damning indictment of Redbrick. I've always had great sympathy for you. They will not understand that a joke is a joke. Everything must be serious.

AMIS: "A fever chart of society."

LEWIS: One thing in science fiction that weighs against us very heavily is the horrible shadow of the comics.

ALDISS: I don't know about that. Titbits Romantic Library doesn't really weigh against the serious writer.

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LEWIS: That's a fair analogy. All the novelettes didn't kill the ordinary legitimate novel of courtship and love.

ALDISS: There might have been a time when *S.F.* and comics were weighed together and found wanting, but that at least we've got past.

AMIS: I see the comic books that my sons read, and you have there a terribly vulgar reworking of the themes that science fiction goes in for.

LEWIS: Quite harmless, mind you. This chatter about the moral danger of the comics is absolute nonsense. The real objection is against the appalling draughtsmanship. Yet you'll find the same boy who reads them also reads Shakespeare or Spenser. Children are so terribly catholic. That's my experience with my stepchildren.

ALDISS: This is an English habit, to categorise: that if you read Shakespeare you can't read comics, that if you read science fiction you can't be serious.

AMIS: That's the thing that annoys me.

LEWIS: Oughtn't the word "serious" to have an embargo slapped on it? "Serious" ought to mean simply the opposite of comic, whereas now it means "good" or "Literature" with a capital L.

ALDISS: You can be serious without being earnest.

LEWIS: Leavis demands moral earnestness; I prefer morality.

AMIS: I'm with you every time on that one.

LEWIS: I mean I'd sooner live among people who don't cheat at cards than among people who are earnest about not cheating at cards.

Look, you want to borrow Abbot's *Flatland,* don't you? I must go to dinner I'm afraid. [Hands over *Flatland*] The original manuscript of the *Iliad* could not be more precious. It's only the ungodly who borroweth and payeth not again.

AMIS: (*reading*) By A. Square.

LEWIS: But of course the word "square" hadn't the same sense then.

ALDISS: It's like the poem by Francis Thompson that ends "She gave me tokens three, A look, a word of her winsome mouth, and a sweet wild raspberry"; there again the meaning has changed. It really was a wild raspberry in Thompson's day.

LEWIS: Or the lovely one about the Bishop of Exeter, who was giving the prizes at a girls' school. They did a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and the poor man stood up afterwards and made a speech and said (piping voice) "I was very interested in your delightful performance, and among other things I was very interested in seeing for the first time in my life a female Bottom...."

5

Letter from Rome

On the Italian Left

WHAT I may call Togliattism is the most notable by-product of the uneasiness that has crept into a good many Communist parties at the harsh, if bloodless, manner of poor Mr. Khrushchev's defenestration. The real centre of Togliattism, however unlikely this may seem, is at present located not in Italy but in Paris, among the fellow-travelling intellectuals whose leader is J.-P. Sartre. For them the memorandum drawn up by Togliatti at Yalta just before his death has assumed a significance far beyond that attributed to it in Italy, or by anyone acquainted with the circumstances and purpose in which and for which it was written. To put it briefly, they find confirmation in this memorandum that Communism can be adapted to the requirements of a more highly-developed society. In point of fact what it actually consists of are Togliatti's notes for the remarks and suggestions he intended to make at the interview he was waiting to have with Khrushchev. As is well-known, death overtook him before the meeting could be held, and his notes were published in Italy with as much solemnity as if they had been his political testament.

The highly charged atmosphere around Togliatti's recent funeral helped to create a distasteful mythology (and this, even in the "bourgeois" press). To make the career of a man like Togliatti sound remarkable would not, I should have thought, require much invention or distortion of the truth. Yet every great totalitarian organisation requires an apparatus of propaganda and fable from which (as Togliatti himself admitted to me on an occasion I can well remember) it is often impossible to dissociate oneself.

There is, for example, a Dostoevsky-like version of how Togliatti was put up against a wall, but escaped execution thanks to the lightning intervention of a "Comando" of the Roman Communist Federation, which routed the Fascists. (It was first announced in a commemorative number of *L'Unità,* on October 28th, 1946.) The aim of this ingenious, but completely unfounded, tale was to show that one of the principal objectives of Mussolini's march on Rome in 1922 was the capture and execution of Togliatti; and that the weak, disorganised,

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and unarmed Roman Communist Federation was so prepared for battle that it could, in a matter of hours, mobilise real "Comando" units. In fact, the only anti-Fascist organisation in Rome at the time was the so-called *"Arditi del Popolo,"* formed of republicans, anarchists, and socialists, with one or two undisciplined Communist elements.

I had barely finished reading this preposterous account in one of the ante-chambers of Montecitorio (I was then a member of the Constituent Assembly), when I ran into Togliatti himself. I asked him if he had read it, and if so, why he allowed such fairy-tales to be printed. Accompanying his words with a shrug of the shoulders, he replied that a high percentage of the masses required legends of this kind. I had known and respected Togliatti since his youth, when we were bound by ties of friendship, and by our common aims during the clandestine anti-Fascist days (feelings which were so reciprocal that he had done all he could to persuade me not to repudiate Communism, thereby incurring the wrath of Moscow). His words that day were a great disappointment to me.

After the recent obituary notices, containing this story along with many others of the same apocryphal kind, all of them part and parcel of the official history of the Italian Communist Party, and widely accepted, I feel I must object, disagreeable as it is to do so. I have no intention of blackening the reputation of a man who was widely admired; but attention should be drawn to the propaganda methods which are inseparable from every totalitarian system. It must be continually enthusing over its leader, to the exclusion of collaborators and possible rivals, identifying him with the history of the party from its early days, often depreciating the work of its real founders, representing him as possessing every civic and spiritual virtue, courage, consistency, impartiality, disinterestedness, unfailing prescience, attributing every success to him, every failure to his lieutenants. I am not suggesting that leaders of other political parties are averse to such treatment—far from it! I do contend, however, that only in the totalitarian mass parties are the conditions ideal for this idolatry; and they are supported to-day by the benevolence of the liberal press, the radio, television, the cinema, and the Pope's public invocation of the protection of the Madonna for Togliatti during his last illness.

THE CELEBRATED MEMORANDUM discloses nothing sensational even to the most attentive reader. On the question of Peking, Togliatti intended advising Khrushchev not to let himself get embroiled in ideological disputations. Togliatti was convinced that in matters of doctrine the Chinese Communists would gain easy victory, submerging their Muscovite comrades in avalanches of quotations from Marx and Lenin. The only kind of discussion that, in Togliatti's view, it would be safe to engage in with the Chinese was that of concrete fact: the present political situation in this or that particular country. Only on this pragmatic debating-ground might it be possible to get the better of the Chinese. But, Togliatti intended saying, since Peking will never agree to a debate without a clearly-defined ideological premise, why not simply postpone the summit meeting and abandon all controversy? The controversy with Peking has in fact been creating much confusion among the rank-and-file of both the French and Italian Communist parties, where Leninist orthodoxy somehow manages to co-exist with *Realpolitik*. So Togliatti's intended advice was dictated by common sense and prudence alike.

There were other things in the memorandum. The same considerations that, in the past, led Moscow to liquidate the Comintern and the Cominform ought now, in Togliatti's opinion, to counsel a "polycentric" form of association among the various Communist parties, in the sense that each should be allowed a certain autonomy in matters of organisation and tactics. In vital questions of foreign policy all Communist parties would of course continue, as in the past, to take their orders from Moscow. Moreover, both the initiative of this polycentrism and the clear definition of its limits should come, not from the individual Communist parties but directly from Moscow itself.

The memorandum further contains some succinct comments on the negative repercussions from which Western Communist parties have to suffer as a result of the brutal attitude adopted by the Russian authorities towards writers and artists, and of the systematic apologia for every single thing that happens in the Soviet world. It may appear strange that Togliatti, after asking to be allowed a little more autonomy, should still nevertheless have wanted to consult Khrushchev about the internal problems of the Italian Communist Party. The PCI was recently obliged to disband its central school for party workers because the study of Marx and Lenin was filling the students' heads with "doubts" and "objections" concerning the day-to-day policies of the Party. What is happening to the PCI is what inevitably befalls any movement or institution that at a certain stage of its development finds it has strayed very far from the ideals with which it began. We should try, observed Togliatti in his memorandum, to bring our conception of the democratic State closer to its reality—a network of key-positions of power that we can conquer

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even without a violent revolution. But although he could say this, Togliatti's ambiguity enabled him at the same time to condemn all forms of revisionism.

IN WRITING this memorandum for his interview with Khrushchev, Togliatti was not going beyond the role of technical consultant to which he had resigned himself ever since, in 1929–30, he had after much hesitation broken with Bukharin and placed himself at the orders of Stalin. That act of his was nothing less than moral suicide, and his intelligence continued thereafter to function solely and merely as a technical instrument. Never, perhaps, did Italian politics produce such a perfect example of Machiavellianism incarnate. He served as Stalin's technical consultant throughout the most horrible episodes of the Stalinist terror: from the liquidation of the revolutionary elements in the Spanish Civil War to the extermination of all the leaders of the Polish Communist Party. All that the Yalta memorandum amounts to, therefore, is simply an expert's opinion as to the best method of overcoming certain difficulties that have arisen in the international Communist movement. It is difficult to see how these few pages written *ad hoc* for an immediate, practical purpose could possibly open up "new horizons" of revolutionary thinking. The PCI's motive in publishing them was twofold: to pacify the various anti-conformist groups that have recently been murmuring in its ranks, and to wash its hands publicly of the situation that was developing in Moscow.

Where exactly does the PCI stand at the moment? This is a hard question to answer, if only because the PCI appears to be in the throes of searching for a new orientation without its leaders having reached any kind of prior agreement. Almost every issue of the authoritative Party review *Rinascita* publishes articles that constitute a break with the traditional party line. For the time being the debate is confined to the Italian Communist leaders, who expound their respective opinions without engaging in controversy. The variety of their opinions gives the measure of their disagreement. Natta would like to see the Party come frankly to terms with the fact of religion, and stop referring to it as a mere by-product of the social structure; Amendola would like to see a single, united Italian Workers' Party in which Communists and Social Democrats would merge, each abandoning their distinctive points of view; Ingrao is in favour of condemning the single-party régime. But the almost uncanny thing is that all this ferment seems to be arousing no interest whatsoever among the Party's rank-and-file, which gives the impression of being very largely de-politicised. If the leaders reach a compromise, the rank-and-file will probably remain in its present state of political apathy. If no compromise can be found, it is hard to say what will become of the PCI.

Ignazio Silone

Oxford Reformed?

AS EDITOR of *The Oxford Magazine* I am at the receiving end of all sorts of articles about Oxford and its future. Usually the views that I get, whether written or in conversation, are highly critical of one or other aspect of the University and its organisation, yet in the last few months I have detected a change of tone in what people have to say about this place. People have moved over from the defensive to the offensive. (Indeed one might go so far as to say that the vigorously offensive manner is coming to replace the deliberate snideness that has hitherto marked Oxford conversation.)

The cause of this change is, I suspect, the Franks Commission. The Commission was set up in reaction to the criticisms in the Robbins report about Oxford and its ways. These criticisms concerned the organisation of the University and were tempered by praise of Oxford's academic achievements, though some people would seem to have found running through the report a fairly continuous denigration of this University. Not only were Lord Robbins and his report riding high a few months ago (it was before successive governments had adopted policies almost diametrically opposed to those which he had recommended), but it seemed likely that Mr. Richard Crossman would become Secretary of State for Education in a Labour Government with an overwhelming majority.

In the circumstances, Lord Franks was given a very broad brief to investigate virtually everything in the University. Clearly the Commission adopted the policy early on that they would seek as much outside criticism of the University as it was possible to induce the more vocal critics to send in. Some critics have obviously refused to give evidence but a surprising number have, and because of the Commission's policy of publishing everything that it gets, these criticisms, ranging from the subtle and constructive like those of Mr. Noël Annan and Lord Heyworth, to the quite clearly insane (which have chiefly come from certain members of the University), have been given banner headlines in the national and local press.

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Oxford lacks any press officer or policy for dealing with the press. Consequently the only news about Oxford that leaks out is concerned with drug addiction, sexual frolics, and the odd drunken drowning. To this usual trickle which Fleet Street gets by paying £2 2s. od. a story, and allowing stringers to reverse the charges, the local part-time press representatives have added by picking out the juiciest bits of the more barmy memoranda. The result is it has been singularly unpleasant to be a member of the University of Oxford in the last year or so. It has been like sitting in the later stages of Harold Macmillan's cabinet. One bad joke has succeeded another. At long last people are fed up and feel that they should begin to blow Oxford's own trumpets.

IN THE FIRST PLACE Oxford is an excellent teaching institution. It would of course be better still with more organised lectures, with a system of classes or seminars, and probably with a revised curriculum. Yet the process of education here is patently a good one, as most teachers who have had experience of other universities would agree. The draw-back of the system is that it makes exceptionally heavy demands on the time and emotional stamina of the dons—who work considerably harder than dons at other universities. The reason for this is clear from the Robbins report. Our pupil-teacher ratio is worse than the national average; we are more than 200 teachers short.

The second thing that the University is good at is research. It has some of the biggest and best scientific departments in the world. It has a large and flourishing economics sub-faculty. Its philosophy faculty is easily the biggest and the best in the Commonwealth.

Again, it is easy to see that the research could be improved. The library system in Oxford is a bad joke compared with American university libraries. There is a lack of research assistance and even such elementary matters as secretarial help are overlooked. It is also extremely difficult for many people to do much research in term because of the demands of undergraduates to be taught, to be comforted, and to be entertained, and the requirements of University and College Administration. But even so, despite these handicaps, the amount of scholarly work done at Oxford is remarkably high. Because there is no public relations officer of any kind, no mention of this work gets reported in the press.

One small point may perhaps illustrate this. When Dr. Dorothy Hodgkin got her Nobel Prize there was nobody here to tell the press what she did. An ancient and patently bad photograph, presumably found by her charlady, appeared with small paragraphs which were exceptionally uninformative. In any other University, British or American, the Vice-Chancellor would have issued a statement and a full description of her work, and its connection with the University of Oxford would have been demonstrated.

Two aspects of Oxford's life which have caused most of our troubles in recent years have been admissions and the zoology tower. Both spring from the complex constitutional structure of the University. Admissions are in the hands of the colleges, consequently any centralised system is exceedingly difficult to institute and operate. Despite this it is quite clear that the trend has been towards the admission in greater numbers of boys from maintained grammar schools. The utter complexity (amounting to madness at times) of the admissions procedure derives from the attempt on the part of the admissions authorities to meet the often quite reasonable demands of a number of people who are concerned with the admissions process. The only way round this is to simplify the machinery somewhat ruthlessly, and to adopt a really forward-looking admissions policy of the kind that Harvard operates so well. (Yet it is fair to say that if Oxford were to adopt such policy, it would be streets ahead of any other English university whose policies, after all, may be easier to understand, but are certainly no more biased in favour of the working class than ours.)

The other piece of bad public relations was the zoology tower. A skyscraper had apparently been promised to the zoologists, yet when the plan was finally put before Congregation (the parliament of the University) it was turned down. (Most people would say that this is an excellent way of running a university. Would that more people in more places were able to vote against skyscrapers being built on the edge of parks.) But it is admitted that all the time and energy that had gone into planning the skyscraper had been wasted. What had clearly gone wrong was the process of seeking out general university opinion. This simple point seems never to have been made. Instead, Oxford has gained a reputation for frivolous votes on serious matters and for a lack of understanding of science and its ways.

John Vaizey

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Hobsbawm's Choice

By George Lichtheim

A USEFUL WAY of dealing with an important and difficult book is to announce beforehand that one is not going to bother with most of the contents, but come straight to the main theme. I propose to follow this line in approaching what I take to be the central argument of Mr. Hobsbawm's essay collection,[1] much of which has to do with highly specialised subjects, such as the controversy over the impact of the industrial revolution on 19th-century society. These matters are important, notably in their bearing upon the perennial debate between liberals and socialists over working-class conditions in Victorian Britain. But they involve a number of technical issues which only economic historians are really able to judge, and Mr. Hobsbawm is much more than an economic historian, though he can hold his own in any argument among experts in this field. As readers of his *Age of Revolution* have already discovered, he is both a specialist and a "generalist," and it is this unusual combination which makes him a challenge to the profession.

Labouring Men is a collection of studies ranging from a brief sketch of Tom Paine, via some detailed investigations into trade unionism, to a reconsideration of the Marxian and Fabian traditions in the British Socialist movement. Having decided to ignore the more technical aspects, I am under a moral obligation at least to say very briefly that in his capacity as an economic historian the author restates the socialist argument, and does so in what (to this reviewer anyhow) seems a very convincing fashion: notably in dealing with some latter-day attempts by academic liberals to suggest that (a) there never was an industrial revolution and (b) insofar as there was one, it was uniformly beneficial in raising working-class standards of living. Some of the more tendentious arguments in this field are demolished by Mr. Hobsbawm in his most crushing manner, and with a wealth of technical reference which should satisfy the experts. He is particularly good in defending Marx and Engels against the charge of having exaggerated the horrors of early capitalism. My only complaint here is that he does not go far enough. More could have been said about the contrast between social conditions in Britain and on the Continent, and about the extra price paid by the British working class during a lengthy period when society was wholly unprepared to cope with the catastrophic effects of sudden industrialisation. On the Continent the upheaval came later, and generally took less disastrous forms. Even to-day Milan, Lyons, and Düsseldorf compare favourably with Manchester. At a time when everyone demands to know what is wrong with British industry (and with the unions), this topic would have merited some extra consideration.

Having chosen to treat the subject in isolation from general European conditions, Mr. Hobsbawm concentrates on what happened before and after the free-trade boom of 1850–75 led to a rise in real wages and a corresponding improvement in living conditions. In this way we get the familiar picture of British labour (notably its skilled "aristocracy") coming to share the benefits of Britain's dominant position on the world market and—a little later—of the "imperial" enterprise. This is the point where Mr. Hobsbawm injects his Marxian approach into the socialist tradition he shares with other writers. Socialism and Marxism are of course difficult to disentangle—notably in relation to Britain, since much of Marx's argument was constructed around the British case. This tends to be overlooked, and he does well to recall it. Whether this entitles him to take the further step towards a Leninist interpretation of imperialism is another matter. The reader had better know that Mr. Hobsbawm is not just a Marxist, but a Marxist-Leninist, though a very sophisticated specimen of the breed. If one happens to believe that Leninism is quite irrelevant to *any* of the problems that arise in connection with West European economic and political

[1] *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour.* By E. J. HOBSBAWM. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 55s.

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history over the past century, one will tend to take his more topical reflections with a large helping of salt. In case some of his readers be put off by a suspicion that he is trying to make a political case, let it be said that this is quite unwarranted. Mr. Hobsbawm really does know an enormous amount about his subject and has a first-rate critical mind, as well as a truly remarkable intellectual range. It is just that his residual loyalties occasionally get in the way of his perception.

THE POINT can be illustrated by a consideration of his treatment of what to every Marxist must clearly be the most puzzling feature of British labour history in this century: the strength of the "reformist" tradition. For a start Mr. Hobsbawm very effectively disposes of a pseudo-problem by demolishing the tedious nonsense about the labour movement having always been "more Methodist than Marxist." As against Elie Halévy's well-known thesis that Methodism saved Britain from revolution during and after the Napoleonic age, he makes the perfectly sound point that there never was a revolutionary situation during those years, so that no saviour was needed. He also reminds the reader that not all the Nonconformists were as conservative as the Wesleyans—some in fact were (by British standards) pretty radical. Next, he traces the ancestry of the London labour movement (from which the Social-Democratic Federation arose in the 1880s) to the anti-clerical radicalism and rationalism of Paine. He also defends the SDF against the imputation of having always been an unimportant sect: it was in fact the training-ground of an entire generation of important labour leaders (including Ernest Bevin, who joined this "Marxist" organisation as a young man becase it was more militant than the evangelical ILP). He even has a good word for the eccentric H. M. Hyndman, who dominated the SDF from its founding in 1881 to the outbreak of war in 1914. And, needless to say, he takes due note of the fact that most (though not all) of these pre-war Social-Democrats in 1920 joined the Communist Party.

He then asks the inevitable question why Marxism has, on the whole, failed to capture the British labour movement, and gives the sensible reply that the country lacked a revolutionary tradition. As he puts it, "on the Continent mass movements could develop on the basis of a political attitude which in Britain merely isolated a militant minority." The reference here is not to Communism, but to the

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pre-1914 Social-Democratic parties in France and Germany. These movements had no counterparts in Britain (except for the tiny SDF) because—as he very convincingly shows—the outlook of the working class was overwhelmingly liberal-radical rather than revolutionary. *No one* in Britain thought in terms of conquering political power; and this in turn was quite simply due to the fact that the country had missed the formative experience of the French Revolution.

To me this explanation seems wholly convincing; but it knocks a rather large hole into the Leninist approach to which Mr. Hobsbawm is attached for other reasons. If the determining factor in the orientation of the British labour movement was ideological (in the widest sense of the term), we do not need to be told quite so much about the economics of imperialism. The simple fact appears to be that British labour has traditionally shared the conservative outlook of the British middle class, just as French labour has inherited the Jacobin tradition of French bourgeois republicanism. The decisive factor, in other words, was a difference in the historical inheritance. This translated itself, *inter alia*, into the absence of that very French (and Russian) phenomenon: the revolutionary intelligentsia. There was no such stratum in Britain, and consequently the labour movement never became acquainted with Marxism, except in the tedious, sectarian, and irrelevant version dished out by Hyndman (and, though Mr. Hobsbawm disputes this, by the Communists after 1917).

THE OBVERSE OF THIS PICTURE is presented by the success of Fabianism: a topic Mr. Hobsbawm finds distasteful, as well he might. Matters of taste aside (he is not alone in thinking the Fabians provincial and boring) there remains the question why they succeeded where the Marxians failed. The nearest Mr. Hobsbawm comes to clarifying this topic is in a passage where he observes that the Marxist tradition in Britain

> was first and foremost a proletarian one. . . . The SDF neither attracted nor held home-grown middle class intellectuals in any quantity. . . . The junction between the intellectuals and the labour movement was not made until the period of, say, 1910–20, for before then even the Fabians, who did attract them, kept aloof from the labour movement. Hence incidentally the abnormal weakness of British socialist theory, including Marxism, in this, the golden age of international Marxist thinking. The British counterpart of Luxemburg and Hilferding was not a socialist, but a liberal, J. A. Hobson.

I read this passage as a reluctant admission that a viable socialist movement requires "the junction between the intellectuals and the labour movement." Presumably Mr. Hobsbawm has been assisted towards this discovery by his Leninist background, but the same conclusion can also be reached by different ways: the Fabian road among them.

Mr. Hobsbawm dislikes the Fabians, though partly on grounds not shared by all their critics. (I should say it is possible to dislike them for better reasons than the ones he advances.) At the same time he is too acute not to see that their strength lay precisely in the feature which so irritated Engels: their social composition. The Fabians were a body of professional men and women drawn from the middle class; they were thus able to reformulate socialist doctrine in terms which appealed to the rising managerial stratum, and to the educated class in general. Moreover, their ideology was anti-liberal as well as anti-Marxist. It thus made contact with the authoritarian temper prevalent among civil servants and others disgusted with *laissez-faire* and vaguely sympathetic to "planning." (It also caused the Webbs and Shaw to flirt simultaneously with Stalinism and Fascism in the 'thirties, though Mr. Hobsbawm tactfully forbears from making the point.) The Fabians, in short, could turn themselves into the nucleus of a new governing élite, while their Marxist rivals could not (at any rate not in Britain). In our present technological age this is a considerable advantage. Mr. Hobsbawm grudgingly concedes the point and then falls back on sociology: the Webbs represented a "new social stratum." Well, so they did, and what is wrong with that? After all, planned economies have to be administered by economists and other bureaucrats, and it is just as well if the bureaucrats have had some sort of socialist background. However boring Fabianism may be, it is less irrelevant to the problems of socialist economy than Leninism. Messrs. Brezhnev and Kosygin would be better off if they had a small Fabian planning staff, though of course under Soviet conditions there is no need to persuade the unions to accept a wage stop: wages are centrally fixed, and that is that. One feels that Mr. Hobsbawm has not quite thought his analysis through to the end. *Of course* Fabianism did not reflect working-class sentiment: who ever said it did? This does not make it less of a socialist doctrine.

> Among the many failures of the Fabians, the failure to analyse the nature and historical basis of their model of the socialist élite is not the least striking.

Well, perhaps, only it has to be added that they were pretty successful in taking over the administration of the new society. Whether they can make a success of running it, now that they

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are in charge, is of course another matter. If they fail, who is there to replace them on the Left? Not, I should imagine, the heirs of Lenin. The fact seems to be that Marxism has twice missed the boat so far as the British labour movement is concerned. In the 1880s it was introduced by Hyndman—a disaster from which it never recovered, despite all that Mr. Hobsbawm has to say about the man. Then after 1920 Marxism was taken over, and thoroughly wrecked, by the British Communist Party: another working-class sect (though somewhat larger than the SDF) which failed to make contact with the intellectuals, a few shining exceptions apart. The simple truth is that a Marxist movement (or any other) can establish its hold over society only if it begins by winning over the intellectual élite. This—as Mr. Hobsbawm well knows—has been the secret of Italian Communism. Inversely it explains why the British CP has always been such a hopeless failure. Labouring men by themselves cannot make a revolution. Lenin knew this; so did the Fabians. Mr. Hobsbawm does too. Why does he not say so?

Whom the Gods Loathe

Max Beerbohm: Letters to Reggie Turner. Edited by RUPERT HART-DAVIS. *Rupert Hart-Davis*, 42s.

Max: a Biography. By DAVID CECIL. *Constable*, 50s.

Those whom the gods loved died in July 1914.
Those whom the gods liked died very soon after Armistice Day, in November 1918.
Those whom the gods hated lived to see the War's effects.
Those whom the gods loathed will live to see the effects of this war.

MAX BEERBOHM wrote this in a notebook during the second war. He died in 1956, after forty years of old age; for we are told that after 40 he "deliberately brought his life to a standstill," and after 50 "lived the life of a retired elderly man." Even in his earlier years he had played at being old, publishing his *Works* at the age of 24, and courting women, though not without assiduity, in the manner of one in whom the youthful heats were defunct. He had a complicated weakness for chaste actresses and a fastidious dislike for the practice of artists who lived in the metropolis like flies in jam-pots, dying young. Yet his manners were those of the metropolitan dandy, and so were his clothes. "I belong to the Beardsley period," he said.

Beerbohm as he drew himself, one eye shaded by the elegant hat, the body bent away from his interlocutor and the cane hidden behind his back, was a kind of Arnoldian Critic, sublimed, dandified, masked. It is obviously right to accept his word about which period he belonged to—even when he found a new career, late in life, as a broadcaster, it was in retailing reminiscences—but one ought not to forget that his *fin-de-siècle* pose is something more than merely languorous. There is the criticism, sometimes savage enough in the caricatures but more often cool and shrewd, as in his mistrust of Walter Pater and his failure to be bewitched by Oscar Wilde, to whom he owed much. And there is the more important product of the mind held in this difficult pose: certain writings, certain jokes even, which last as long as the very persistent *fin-de-siècle* mood does. *Savonarola Brown*, for instance: in its small way it has usurped that part of our minds with which we criticise the use of the past. Or *Zuleika Dobson*, for all its irrelevant snobbisms a proof that even the English can live with Freudian fantasy. There seems little doubt that Beerbohm had the powers to achieve survival by the surest method, that of providing materials for myth; and that he was cautious enough to do this in books rather than in life, which was the more costly method employed by his brilliant master.

So interesting and involved are the problems that arise from a contemplation of Beerbohm that these books about him have an importance beyond mere biography. Beerbohm wrote to Reggie Turner off and on throughout their lives, and with unusual intimacy, so Mr. Hart-Davis' collection—beautifully presented and annotated, as it is by now hardly necessary to say of his work—is central to the biography. From it we get, for example, the whole strange story of Max watching Max being enamoured of Cissie Loftus. This young girl enchanted him because she appeared on the music hall stage without make-up and very demure in manner. It would be quite easy to read his letters to Turner on this subject as part of a delicate private joke between the two, with fantasies about marrying Cissie and seeing her die at seventeen: "Oh, how lovely it would be." And yet he seems to have been as serious as possible about the girl. Later he entered into two engagements to marry; the first lasted six years although the girl was unsuitable and bored the family. The second also broke down. Both the girls were actresses, neither on the face of it Max's type; when he married it was to another deeply serious and humourless actress, but the union, though childless, was happy. It is hard not to see in these letters a man for whom life was acceptable only if one could remain at a

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distance from it, yet in touch with something that stressed the appearance of life—the clothes and talk of the dandy, with simplicity and seriousness within; or the profession of actress with its existential ambiguities. Max's own life, from the dandy days to the last years in Rapallo, was marked by the same contrast between artificialities of the surface and interior (albeit cultivated) simplicities. One sees why he wrote his remarkable *Yellow Book* "Defence of Cosmetics" at the very time when he was languishing for the unadorned Cissie Loftus. He was being a sort of anglicised Baudelaire, with his own brand of innocent dandyism and his own Jeanne Duval; this, after all, was the man who could use the Oxford Isis as an image of the Freudian ocean.

Lord David Cecil's five-hundred-page biography documents the progress of this witty, melancholy, and old man with sympathetic urbanity and a good sprinkling of jokes. He sees significance in Max's progress from one master of elegance to another, from Wilde to James; but surely he is very un-Jamesian, except that he might, shorn of his Wildean wit, have been a character in a story? Lord David, I think, is successful in bringing out a genuine innocence in Beerbohm, an innocence which he liked to represent as being of the acquired variety described in *The Happy Hypocrite*, and which he certainly associated with the love of good women. But it didn't prevent his spotting the lack of it in others—in Wilde's occasional vulgarities, for example (though it was hardly necessary for Lord David to turn on Wilde in sympathy) or in the touch of intellectual cruelty in Shaw, or in the bogus provincial ninetyism of Le Gallienne (whose very name, Max observed, sounded ungrammatical, and whose hair made him look "like a mixture of Dante and Beatrice"). There is a good story, which rings true to the period, about Conder, who painted fans and did *fin-de-siècle* things in Paris; Beerbohm found him in bed at mid-day, groaning over an immense hangover: "I was up late with some friends," he explained, "and as young fools will, I suppose, we over-ate." The book is long and affectionate, perhaps too long and too affectionate, and it occasionally slips, as when we are told that Marie Lloyd died in 1951; also one would have been grateful for a few references to the sources. But it does the work of relating the whole of Beerbohm's life to the period he chose as his own, Beardsley's.

IT HAS LONG BEEN clear that many of our literary attitudes were formed during this period, and that this goes deeper than the sentimental Edwardianism of Beerbohm's remark about those whom the gods loved. It was the time when we had our last French injections, the time that prepared us for our last great literary period in the years immediately after the Great War. More than that, it was the period that gave us our version of the ancient *fin-de-siècle* myth, a myth of empire, decadence and apocalypse, and our permanent sense of transition. Beerbohm felt some of the comparative innocence of an epoch after which things would fall apart: after us, as Yeats observed at the first night of *Ubu Roi*, the savage god. One wonders why Max did not prefer to stop time before the Wilde trials rather than in 1914—before the tragic generation lost its innocence. He did his best to live as if before the crisis, treating a debauched world with the same distant courtesy he doubtless afforded Conder under the affliction of dyspepsia; and in his last years, as Verlaine said of Tennyson, "when he should have been broken-hearted he had many reminiscences." It was a way of defeating the gods who loathed him, and gave him wars and forms of art and politics he did not like. A melancholy figure, with something melancholy even about the elegance of his famous prose. But he can touch us, if only because we also fear change, are insular, and dread the end of our time or of time.

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Berryman's Songs

77 Dream Songs. By JOHN BERRYMAN. *Faber*, 18s.

JOHN BERRYMAN and Robert Lowell—both around fifty this year—have become the most prominent American poets since the recent deaths of Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, and Theodore Roethke. Of Berryman's last long poem, *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*, Edmund Wilson wrote that it was "the most distinguished long poem by an American since *The Waste Land*." Lowell, Allen Tate, and Conrad Aiken have all added praises of the same order, and so have our own Mr. Kermode and Mr. Alvarez. A poet is important, in his own time, if he is generally thought to be important, and by this criterion there is no doubt whatever that Mr. Berryman deserves attention.

The first thing to be said about his poetry is that though he has become increasingly obscure in his later work he has always remained an immediately appetising poet. He is accessible even when he is not intelligible. Here, for example, is the verse which opens that dense and difficult poem, *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*:

The Governor your husband lived so long
moved you not, restless, waiting for him?
Still,
you were a patient woman—
I seem to see you pause here still:
Sylvester, Quarles, in moments odd you pored
before a fire at, bright eyes on the Lord,
all the children still.
"Simon." Simon will listen while you read a
Song.

Unless we are well prepared for it this is not an opening which offers an easy entry into the sense of the situation, yet it is a beguiling opening none the less. We acknowledge a strongly individual tone and the authority of a poet who has learned to know exactly what he is doing and why he is doing it. The new sequence of poems (nearly all of them are in three verses of six lines each) is far more obscure than *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*, and the tone has changed from the faintly biblical and archaic to the violently modern and demotic. Yet here, too, the first verse has an unusual power to excite and encourage a new reader:

Huffy Henry hid the day,
unappeasable Henry sulked.
I see his point—a trying to put things over.
It was the thought that they thought
they could do *it made Henry wicked away.*
But he should have come out and talked.

The new poem is much more freely written than the earlier one. Its rhymes are irregular; its metre expansive. It is altogether an open poem, while the earlier one was tightly closed in on itself. The method is something like Meredith's in *Modern Love*—a dreamy sequence of events and reflections surrounding a central figure but not always directly concerned with him. Henry, a projection, at very varying distances, of the poet himself, emerges and disappears throughout the sequence, a figure of fun or pity or disapproval. "Mr. Bones"—apparently the death which Henry fears—is a secondary character with whom he engages at times in sinister and ludicrous fragments of dialogue. The poem is so obscure that no reader will avoid being lost in it for much of the time; until the inevitable key is supplied from some English faculty somewhere. Yet the poem remains pleasantly suggestive, at the least, even where its lines make only the vaguest suggestion of sense to us. We feel all the time that new possibilities of verse are being offered us. Here are a few verses which may help to give a flavour of Berryman's latest method:

Ol' Henry then Mount Henery he scale:
or rather fail, being his own Laval—
who he? Sir Vertigo!—
to peak that Everest of old snow.
Instead he tumble nimbly down hisself
und wed a lush; for cash.

Ha ha, fifth column, quisling, genocide,
he held his hands and laught from side to side
a loverly time.
The berries and the rods left him alone less.
Thro' a race of water once I went: happiness.
I'll walk into the sky.

God's Henry's enemy. We're in business....
Why,
what business must be clear.
A cornering.
I couldn't feel more like it.—Mr. Bones,
as I look on the saffron sky,
you strike me as ornery.

Henry he not see the constellations.
He was his own light, or something glowing.
Henry may be going
one day down that pit of deep damnation.
"I can lick any mansize stargazer:
Mr. Bones, I amaze you?"

Henry sats in de plane & was gay.
Careful Henry nothing said aloud
but where a Virgin out of cloud
to her Mountain dropt in light,
his thoughts made pockets & the plane buckt.
"Parm me, lady." "Orright."

The verses are not consecutive, which does Mr. Berryman an injustice. What may prove to do him a greater injustice is that two of them were written by me, taking a few minutes for each verse, and a few more for brushing up; or down. Assuming that the imitation verses escape ready detection something *must* surely

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have been suggested to the poet's disadvantage. It is not a trick that one could have played on Yeats or Eliot when their best feet were forward, and it does at least throw a certain doubt on Allen Tate's belief that Berryman's poetry "cannot be imitated."

My own strange and sad feeling is that he is a poet whose evaporation rate is very high indeed. His early verse was mellifluous, easy to understand and pleasing; but much of it is fairly obvious pastiche of other contemporaries; and it suffers from the fatal defect, as to survival, of being easy in sentiment as well as in expression. The well-known *Ball Poem*, for example, could easily be transcribed into a sentimental popular song about the incurable sadness of a little boy losing his ball. *Boston Common* reveals, under the surface rhetoric, a depressingly trite meditation on history and present time. Worse than this, I have found that my many readings of *Mistress Bradstreet* since its first appearance here in 1959 have reduced that initially exciting poem to something a good deal less than it seemed.

These readings have reduced, first of all, the apparent originality of the diction and the form. The influences of Hopkins and Dylan Thomas, evident from the first, have become by now almost unbearably oppressive. The subject itself seems more and more arbitrary. Was it chosen, this oblique narrative of a poetess who was also one of the earliest settlers in New England, simply because of its alluring exoticism? Mr. Berryman demonstrates in the course of the poem that Anne Bradstreet was herself a very bad poet. He is paying, of course, a tribute to courage, and this is not a trite theme, but, on the contrary, one of those "eternal commonplaces" which are the proper subjects of much ambitious poetry. And no doubt, too, he was genuinely excited, as any poet might be, by the harsh temerity of that particular pioneering community. Yet as the apparent difficulties of the poem resolve themselves most of them are seen to be of that irrelevant kind which are simply due to the poet having acquired information—in this case biographical information—which the reader is unlikely to possess.

Similarly, when the Dream Poems emerge into the light of day it is often into a common light indeed. Generalisations, for example, leap out of the exotic turmoil from time to time with a rather sickening thud: "However things hurt, men hurt worse." "Women is better, braver." "Death is a German expert." The obvious jokes

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are well below *New Yorker* standard: "My psychiatrist can lick your psychiatrist," "and something can (has) been said for sobriety/but very little." There are "shocking" juxtapositions which are painfully corny, as in these opening lines of Poem 66:

"All virtues enter into this world":
A Buddhist, doused in the street, serenely burned.
The Secretary of State for War,
winked it over, screwed a redhaired whore.

A whole poem is devoted to a sardonic attack on Eisenhower which contributes nothing at all to our feelings about that deplorable president.

Of course it is true that the sequence of the poems, and the apparently arbitrary choice of subjects, have been carefully thought out by the poet and will reveal, in time and with outside help, a sense and a "point" which no reader can yet discern. There seems, for example, to be a Christian message running through the *Dream Songs*, and this may become more explicit both with time and study and with the further series of poems which are promised. Yet I feel bound to suspect that there will *not* emerge a sense of that inevitable union of means and meaning which we receive from all good poetry. I feel bound to suspect that Mr. Berryman has wrapped up an untranscended poverty of thought and feeling in a form which may excite but cannot feed his readers.

Yet this does not mean that this poet is meretricious as a man or futile as a poet. In his search for new means he remains excitingly suggestive. This particular combination of one kind of demotic speech—much of it joke-negro—with a deliberate narrative confusion and a deliberate obliqueness of public reference remains stimulating even when its matter and its particular application have become suspect. In one way Pound was a very different kind of poet from Berryman: what lay behind *his* obscurities and technical innovations was not a meditative triteness but an insane message, or command. Yet it may be that Berryman will prove to have done as great a service to the poets of his own time as Ezra Pound did for the poets of fifty years ago and ever since. There is a wry nobility in this role—to have achieved comparatively little for or by oneself and yet to have been the means of liberating other poets and enabling them to succeed where the innovator has himself failed. Perhaps Eliot's insistent gratitude to Pound contained something of this sad, and never expressed, recognition.

The first and the fourth of those quoted verses were not written by Mr. Berryman.

Philip Toynbee

The Singer not the Song

The Painter of Modern Life and other essays. By CHARLES BAUDELAIRE. Translated and edited by Jonathan Mayne. *Phaidon Press*, 34*s*.

CRITICISM begets criticism. While Baudelaire's writings on art and literature are now accepted as having the authority of revealed truth, critical editions of his criticism, which in turn bring forth new reviews of reviews now a hundred years old, send one flaming into instant rebuttal. This seems to have been the method of the Master himself: sometimes, one feels, when reading the Delacroix obituary, or the Further Notes on Poe, or the article on Wagner, Baudelaire only became fully operational because some poor hack had seen his way clear to attacking the subjects under review. A forensic note is struck; objective assessment is submerged beneath a torrent of partisanship which is basically to do with self-justification; Baudelaire, in a flurry of exhausted brilliance, subsides at last into a deceptive calm, "that delicious phase which follows after a great moral or physical crisis." The method is justifiable, the result ambiguous. Other critics have found themselves in a state of permanent indignation, notably Diderot, Baudelaire's predecessor, and Zola, his true heir; but Diderot, that man of sublime mental health, never found it necessary to write himself out with such violence, while Zola resolved the dilemma of the critic who is also a creative artist by carrying his arguments out of the sphere of aesthetics, where the recompenses for total commitment are small, into the realm of social commitment where they most truly belong. But Baudelaire's physical and moral crises were engendered in his brain, where they also expired; in time he had to have recourse to stimulants and found, in his later years at least, that the greatest stimulant to love was hate. Hence the vituperative passion poured on to the heads of the unenlightened critic, the *hypocrite lecteur*, the Salons and the jurys, the *claque* at the Opera, the people of America, whose collective fault was that they were worshippers infinitely less idolatrous than Baudelaire himself.

Mr. Jonathan Mayne's edition of Baudelaire's critical writings is possibly the clearest, the leanest, and the most leisurely that has appeared so far. His first volume is devoted to the longer essays, all of which date from comparatively late in Baudelaire's life and in which Baudelaire appears in a much more haggard light than he does, for example, in the Salons. It is now generally understood that Baudelaire's choice of heroes was almost autobiographically subjective. He admired men who shared his own preoccupations or whose lives mirrored his own

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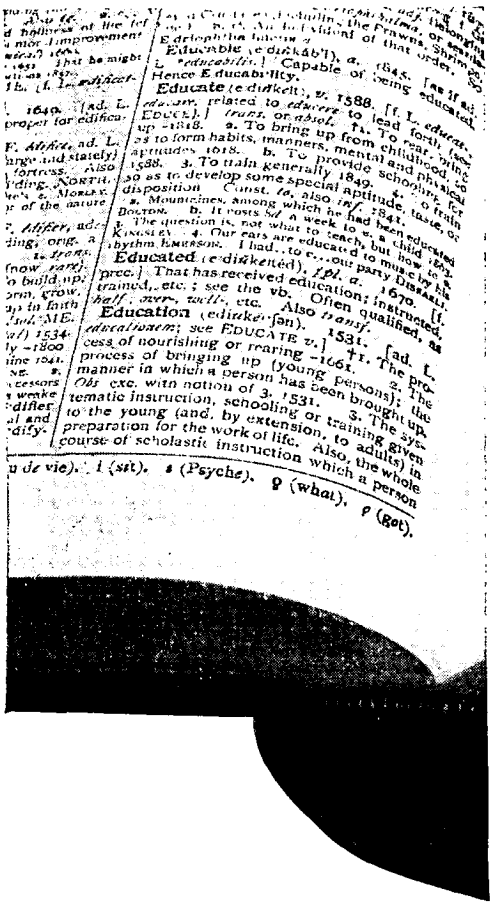

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difficulties. The "theory of correspondences," objectively worthless, is in the main an attempt to explain a sense of affinity with others which Baudelaire was only able to experience on an aesthetic level. His psychological furniture was so cumbersome that it stood in the way of normal relationships while at the same time keeping him in a state of hunger for perfect emotional release. This hunger put a distance between him and the objects of his admiration which he was willing to overlook but of which we are all too aware. The humdrum Guys was no hero in the objective sense, nor, truth to tell, was Edgar Allan Poe. Only Wagner and Delacroix had that superhuman and lonely idealism which Baudelaire saw as the correct mark of the artist-thaumaturge, and of these two only Delacroix had the deeply embattled attitude to life of which Baudelaire approved. Whether, as Baudelaire would have it, Delacroix was basically concerned with salvation or whether he was simply disgusted with the artistic establishment and the general tastelessness of his contemporaries is a matter on which a great deal more critical ink is likely to be expended. It is interesting to note that although Baudelaire did as much for Delacroix as it is possible for one artist to do for another, Delacroix dismissed Baudelaire with the exasperated courtesy with which he dismissed all critics. Guys does not appear to have reacted to his panegyrics in any way at all. Poe, of course, was dead. Only Wagner paid him some kind of appropriate tribute. In life Baudelaire was a much lonelier man, and possibly a more tiresome one, than we are likely to be able to estimate to-day.

BAUDELAIRE

WE ARE ALL with him now, needless to say, yet a reaction is bound to set in (will Zola be the next hero?). We are likely to stir uneasily and remember that the painting of the first half of the nineteenth century was much more than a struggle between Delacroix and Ingres, or that Alfred de Vigny was a better dandy than Edgar Allan Poe, or that Leconte de Lisle was a finer poet than Gautier, to whom Baudelaire defers so generously, or that the lessons learnt by Ingres from the Greeks were far more important than those learnt from the same source by Wagner. We shall never find out why Baudelaire paid no attention to Géricault, whose unique blend of stoicism and vitality has far more to do with the heroism of modern life as Baudelaire understood it than all the nostalgia of Delacroix. In fact, while admiring Baudelaire for having the courage of his obsessions, we shall become increasingly aware of the limitations imposed by them, and seek refuge from his dangerous exhaustion, his desperate brilliance (one is reminded of Molière expiring on the stage of the Comédie Française after giving his all in *Le Misanthrope*), in the placid and informative pages of Taine or Fromentin. We shall, however, continue to need Baudelaire for his excesses, and by that I mean not only his enthusiasms, but his pieties, his unbearable failures: in short, his heroism. In order fully to appreciate Baudelaire attacking the citizens of France for failing to estimate Delacroix at his true worth, it is necessary to bear in mind the painful image of Baudelaire getting up in the morning and putting on the armour of the day in the same spirit as a penitent shuffling to the altar rail (*"Toilette, prière, travail"*). Behind the exuberance of his writing, the consistent sophistication of his judgments, we must remember the driven and unlovable creature who picked fights in the street with uncomprehending glaziers and who noted in his diary the first whisper of approaching lunacy.

FOR THE POINT of Baudelaire is surely not that he is a clever man but that he is a good one, and in this sense irreplaceable. The actual benefits that came out of his critical activities—the canonisation of Delacroix before the statutory period of time required for this condition had elapsed, the perfecting of a vocabulary of "modern" urban subjects that the Impressionists took over lock, stock, and barrel—were, although enormous, incidental. The connections he failed to make are just as weighty. Yet over and above these facts Baudelaire has an aura of something approaching sanctity which was as clearly appreciated after his death as it is to-day. Like Delacroix, his greatness has never been questioned, and while it may be argued that Delacroix's greatness was, in the first instance at least, the creation of Baudelaire, Baudelaire's greatness was self-generated and self-perpetuating. On a purely aesthetic level, we admire him not for picking (in the main) the right painters, writers, and musicians, but for experiencing a world of sensations well beyond the range of average receptivity when confronted with a picture, a poem, or an overture. *"Changer ma volupté en connaissance"*: this is the ideal aim of anyone involved in the art of interpretation. But whereas some kind of *connaissance* is avail-

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able to most honest, serious, or diligent persons, *volupté* is a matter of nerve-ends, of basic temperament, and, more important, deliberate and sustained vulnerability. Baudelaire is an authority not necessarily on Delacroix or Guys or Wagner but on enthusiasm and indignation, on disgust and generosity. Nobody would want to live like him. Most of us would want to write like him. All of us would, or should, want to feel like him.

Anita Brookner

Strange Bedfellow

The Quest for Love. By DAVID HOLBROOK. *Methuen*, 36s.

DAVID HOLBROOK has had what his publishers rather happily describe as "a prolific three years." Since 1961 he has yielded no less than four critical-educational works, two volumes of verse, a novel, and five "compilations." He has also dashed off countless vigilant letters to the Press and left very few of his errant reviewers unreprimanded. The insistent plea throughout has been that we try a little tenderness, that "it is truly love that makes the world go round" and that love, the real thing, is married, awe-struck, procreative. "Bedfellowship is good," he proclaims, and the trouble with contemporary civilisation in general, and the *New Statesman* in particular, is that for most of us it isn't. Psychic weaknesses of one sort or another (arising from a thwarted babyhood—he seems to detect an abruptly withdrawn nipple at the back of every colour supplement) have dogged and soured us into sexual fraud, anxious buffoonery, a cynical sensuality, and so on; and our literature, our teachers from whom enlightment could have sprung, have merely encouraged us in these destructive poses —they too being riddled with psychic weaknesses.

A familiar enough basic routine, and one that irons out most of the subtleties, not just of literary criticism, but of literature; in this new book Holbrook peddles his "tenderer-than-thou" dramatic colouring even more shamelessly than in the past, and has spiced it more systematically with jargon out of psychoanalysis; he also turns on his own—the Leavisite "organic community" is but a mother's lap, and an infuriated third of the whole book is spent asserting that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a mere "act of infantile oral sadism." The prevailing tone, though, is much as usual: a rhapsodising

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missionary zeal tripping time and again into what often seems like its actual source, a cheap, splenetic hostility towards those writers—usually contemporary and successful—whose sexual ambitions Holbrook impertinently, and with a curious curiosity, finds wanting. He is cheerful in his diagnosis of Kingsley Amis' "schizoid terror of adult relationships... whose roots are perhaps in some personal failure at the stage of primal formation of object relationships," and downright triumphant to discover that C. S. Lewis "used the cold word 'copulate,' typically, for it is life that he hated." Holbrook's own use, later in the book, of phrases like "mutual genitality" or "coital experience" is presumably less sinister?

Whatever its avowed starting point and general aim, Holbrook's criticism veers unerringly, and by a strange, almost spellbound course of literal repetition, towards this kind of primitive contest—my sex versus yours; mine clean, yours dirty. It is clear, for instance, that what has finally enraged him about *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is not that its motives are confused, its manners desperate, but that it seems to him to idealise a gratified, childless union. He slavishly has Mellors standing for Lawrence himself (so much so that he can say of Connie at one point that "some of her perceptions are as sharp as Lawrence's") and he mounts a whole chapter on his/their isolated remark that "the baby... is a side issue." He summarises Mellors' central attitude in consequence as "To hell with procreation... I have had good cunt"; and of this invented obscenity he can only bluster: "This, to a woman to whom he has just given his seed." Not to be able to bear this is surely not to be able to bear very much "reality"; Holbrook gives away rather more than he seems to have noticed with his crowning thrust at the vigorous Mellors: "his attitudes to sex are virtually those of a navvy." Of course, the whole area of complicatedly ambivalent experience that struggles and has interesting life between his neat erections of mental and pious sex can be explained away in terms of its failure to be one or the other, and a literature that concerns itself to express something of this subtlety can be dismissed as mere pretence. Not, it should be said, that Holbrook succeeds in exciting much envy for his cherished goal—the "relaxed civilised togetherness... much more forgetful of sensuality" that he recommends smacks depressingly of Darby and Joan. Give me, if I have to choose, "neurotic genitality" any day.

But Holbrook's pretensions are considerable and will no doubt get taken seriously. His long opening chapter, in which he takes us on a wearying and ineptly guided tour of the writings of post-Freudian optimists, from Ian D. Suttie to D. W. Winnicot (it is rarely clear just who and when he is quoting) is offered as a pioneer effort in the direction of what he calls "a new kind of art criticism"—demanding of literature the embodiment of those positive "truths" that are implied by the findings of psycho-analysts. Although what we are told of the analysts' work itself is interesting enough, the conclusions about literary achievement that Holbrook draws from it add up to little more than a rather shallow effort to seize empirical grounds for the ripe old "anti-life" kind of critical legislation. For instance, it really doesn't help his competent but conventional interpretation of *The Winter's Tale* (here, incidentally, he doesn't cite any masters) that Melanie Klein happened also to believe in "the continuity of life," nor that Leontes' jealousy can be "explained" in terms of his "inevitable inner weaknesses." Indeed, the local analysis in this, the only really worthwhile chapter in the book (there is an impressive sensitivity in Holbrook's treatment of the flower ritual, for instance, and a number of sharp incidental perceptions) tends to suggest that he would be considerably better off without his "new kind of art criticism." But these are only brief glimmers. What really delights him about the play is that in it Shakespeare is seen to have got over "those strange obsessions... to be noted at their worst in *Timon* and *Hamlet*," that the patient is on the mend. One shudders to imagine Holbrook at work on the Sonnets.

His efforts to recruit Chaucer are necessarily even more strained, and although he selects the *Franklin's Tale* as Chaucer's moment of true health, it is still necessary to pull some fast ones. *Franklin's Tale* as Chaucer's moment of true as the thin and boringly pious tale that it surely seems to be, must be read in the light of what we are told about the Franklin in the General Prologue, and what he reveals of himself in his own Prologue; he is vain and ingratiating, the perpetual host, and he yearns for the aristocratic graces as exemplified by the Squire, whose tale precedes his. He disclaims any knowledge of rhetoric, then blunderingly goes on to show off every trick he knows; his speeches are formal but repetitive and hollow, he muddles his deities, he submits Dorigen to that hilarious list of *exempla* (which Holbrook happily ignores, though it must be clear, even to him, that it is satirising *something*). He disclaims any knowledge of natural magic, but at the very climax of his tale he introduces a catalogue of technical terminology that quite destroys any dramatic weight the moment might have had. He is at the same time, of course, careful not to offend

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the clerics, and although he knows about magic, and makes it work in the tale, he is careful to scoff at it:

> *For hooly chirches feith in oure bileve*
> *He suffreth noon illusioun us to greve.*

Of this joke, Holbrook makes the solemn comment: "For Chaucer the reality of the world could not be anything other than a divine reality." One could multiply instances which suggest that if Chaucer was not consciously satirising the Franklin in this tale then he was at least aware, in the telling of it, that it was dramatic speech. (Aurelius' vision and the exchange that follows it make a good instance of the Franklin intruding on his action the kind of vision that *he* would like to see, the kind of exchange that was of the first importance in his daily life but hardly so in the magician's.) And yet Holbrook insists that what makes the *Tale* valuable "is the marvellous absence of all irony, in the impressive presence of the Frankleyn and his civilised open humane wisdom." Of course the Franklin was no ironist; he is presented as a damp Holbrookian figure who burdens a slight tale with homily and affectation and rounds it off with the tamest of happy endings. Chaucer was prepared for most things but even he, one suspects, would have been disconcerted by such praise; his great achievement—"the marvellous absence of all irony!"

It is this that could be Holbrook's most serious threat to literature; it is not just that he sees his enemies as madmen—he also makes crashing bores of those whom he claims as friends.

Ian Hamilton

Puzzlers

A Roof of Tiger Lilies. By DONALD HALL. *André Deutsch*, 15s.
Poems Ancient and Modern. By PETER PORTER. *Scorpion Press*, 21s.
Selected Poems. By ANNE SEXTON. *Oxford University Press*, 21s.

IN THE GUGGENHEIM exhibition now at the Tate Gallery there is a picture by René Magritte which is good in a way that I find puzzling. It is a large canvas, and shows a housefront at night, lit by a single street-lamp whose light hardly reaches to the eaves. Above the roof, tree-tops are silhouetted black and lacy against the sky of a sunny spring day, filled with small, soft, very white clouds, and utterly unnocturnal. It is odd how much at home that sky

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seems with the night scene beneath, as though the artificial, paradoxical, conjunction of opposites which is the basis of the picture had been softened somehow into naturalism. It works brilliantly as a metaphor, bringing together feelings common to its two elements, whose real diversity is emphasised, however, by the use of different styles for house and sky. Unity of ideas counts for more than diversity of style. It is just here, though, that the puzzle arises: if the force of the picture lies in its idea, in what could be understood of it even before it was painted, then it is difficult to see what is contributed by *these* particular brush-strokes, by *this* suggestion of light, to the general theme. Style is so far overshadowed by initial conception that the traditional terms of criticism, which lay importance on the unique nature of the work of art and on individual interpretation, seem not to be quite applicable.

Similar kinds of puzzle arise in these three recent books of verse—not that their authors want very much to be puzzling, but that their poems happen to be mysterious in the way their subject-matter shapes its form. This kind of mysteriousness has become not uncommon recently; the traditional formal patterns of verse favoured ten years ago have now been abandoned largely by younger poets in preference for free and syllabic forms so self-effacing that their expressive function is in doubt. Donald Hall is a poet who succeeds where many have failed, and *A Roof of Tiger Lilies* is an excellent book, but from the point of view of form and rhythm it remains mystifying. He writes with an eloquent simplicity that puts questions of metric firmly to one side; to praise him for his style would be like congratulating Pascal on his: not wrong, but largely irrelevant to the matters in hand. He does not decorate his poems; they speak for themselves with a kind of Puritan gravity and intentness, which surely owes something to their author's New Hampshire childhood.

They return again and again to the subject of death:

> *Like an old man,*
> *whatever I touch I turn*
> *to the story of death.*

Death is ambiguously symbolised by snow, which "*must/ come down, even if it struggles/ to stay in the air with the strength/ of the wind.*" It is cold, gradual and has an absolute purity in its whiteness; it preludes the birth of the year as surely as it delays it. It gathers slowly and cannot be prevented:

> *the snow keeps falling*
> *and something will always be falling.*

In another poem we are told of the poet's father that "*his early death grew inside him/ like snow piling on the grass.*" Mr. Hall's best poems all have this note of unforced sadness.

The short lines which I have quoted suggest that though he uses great simplicity of technique it is far from unsophisticated. Death *grows* as snow *piles*; the two verbs don't really match up, and so deftly hint at the uneasiness with which death's place in the economy of life is viewed. By placing together *I touch* and *I turn* Mr. Hall suggests what was at once the gift and curse of Midas; by ending two successive lines emphatically with *falling*, he demonstrates how that word's very sound and meaning refuse to accept stress. His style is full of felicities; the likeness to Magritte lies in one's not seeing how the felicities are rooted in this way of saying things only. Each poem is a sequence of more or less simple statements which fall together—like snow—and hint at the contours of feeling beneath. One is at once satisfied and baffled by the bareness of his poems.

The shorter ones are, on the whole, noticeably less good, perhaps because they are not able to use repetition and contrast with such unostentatious cunning. They have to be more explicit, and their simplicity seems more artificial. Even the longer pieces become at times sentimental, as though Mr. Hall's tight-lipped curb on obvious feelings were too difficult to maintain. "The Old Pilot's Death," for example, is fanciful and evasive:

> *In the distance, circling*
> *in a beam of late sun like birds migrating,*
> *there are thin wings of a thousand biplanes.*
> *He banks and flies to join them.*

This does not represent the general level of achievement; the best poems are continuously, yet mutely, surprising but right—these lines from "New Hampshire" may give an idea:

> *Fat honey bees*
> *meander among raspberries where a quarrel*
> *of vines crawls into the spilled body of a plane.*

The mind enters a series of shocks in reading this simple, descriptive sentence, First it is lulled by the *meandering* of the bees and then jolted awake by the *quarrel*. But the quarrel turns out to be only metaphorical—only *vines*. The vines, however, *crawl* like insects dabbling in something *spilled* (raspberry jam, perhaps; the innocence of the bees seems to be invoked here). The fact that it is a *body* that has been spilled changes one's reaction yet again; only the body of a *plane*, of course, but the human disaster, already suggested by the quarrel, effectively darkens the natural scene. These successive shocks are held in check by the syllabic line,

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whose irregular stresses are deployed to soften the blows as they come. Both *vines* and *crawls* are stressed yet juxtaposed—"a quarrel of *vines crawls*"—and this modifies the force with which their meaning strikes us. Mr. Hall is astonishingly good at this sort of thing; he uses syllabic verse with such skill that one neglects to ask why he chose it in the first place. But if you ask the question, it is mystifying; the poems exist suspended in mid-air, with no general context of feeling or norm of rhythm to which to refer.

PETER PORTER'S VERSE establishes a norm of abnormality in rhythm as in everything else. These brilliant poems are puzzling in so far as the things they catalogue—for example,

> *an hermaphrodite Pope*
> *From the Joke Shop with working parts*
> *To embarrass Catholic friends*

seem to elbow the particular manner of expression out of the way. One wants to call the poems baroque, because such details crowd the structure on which they stand out of sight. It is easy to feel that you are faced by a heap of unorganised particulars, but this is quite a wrong feeling. Mr. Porter's subject is civilisation in decline, and he evidently relishes the implicit parallel of his "ancient" poems between the corrupt civilisation of the Roman Empire and our own. He is attracted by the equivocal in human behaviour, or, rather, it is the favourite object of his loathing. His "Encounter in Antioch" ridicules pagan and Christian:

> *Your God became a man, our grandest men*
> *Have trouble becoming Gods.*

The second part of the sentence is equally indifferent to theology and reason; the poem objects to the way in which categories are blurred when Gods become men and *vice versa*. The pagan foresees the day when Christians will be in the ascendency, and so ripening for decline:

> *Drink down a cup of water and look out*
> *On the town—the someone whose hat*
> *You laugh at may stop and the great tide start*
> *To come in on his stranger's gifted face.*

What do all these distinctions mean? History is the painful fluctuation of cultures; human conduct is reduced by it to the absurd:

> *I met a man had three shits*
> *A day in honour of the Trinity.*

These *Poems Ancient and Modern* are permeated with the sense that life is being lived for us. They are packed with the description of objects because objects are pushing men out of

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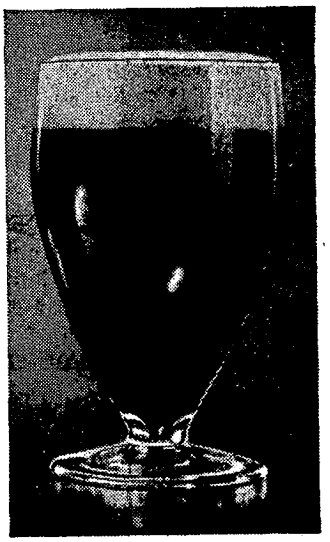
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their own world. "Spending money is the kindest orgasm," and possession is "Nine Points of the Law," the title of the best sequence in the book. There are four beautiful poems "Changed from Martial's Epigrams"; Mr. Porter's likeness to Martial lies not only in the scene he describes, but also in his unwilling involvement in it. "The Sins of the Fathers" begins by contemplating cruelty to animals, turns to reflect that

somewhere every second occurs
Some unswervable agony,

and ends by picturing the relation of child to parent as that of the trap to the tortured beast. In the middle of this disturbing poem, which reduces love to the guilty admission of sins, the poet says of himself that he "welcomes" guilt. It is just this fact, that guilt is welcomed along with so much else that one would have thought unequivocally bad, that gives the poems their deepest force.

I am not put off by the gold filling
Beating in your tidal mouth.

This comic, pathetic, horrific obstinacy amazes yet appals. And it is there, perhaps, rather than in Mr. Porter's dazzlingly inventive and repulsive catalogues, that the puzzle lies.

ANNE SEXTON'S POEMS have been compared with Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*, but their subject-matter—insanity, abortion, isolation, death—is more disturbing, and less well handled. They have been greatly praised, and she obviously can write well; but she has suffered terribly, and she is able to write about it with the excellence she aims at only occasionally. One is too often reminded of Dr. Johnson's remark about melancholy: "A man so afflicted, Sir, must divert distressing thoughts, and not combat with them." Her style is rhetorical, but surely sacrifices tone to effect in such an opening as:

You, Doctor Martin, walk
from breakfast to madness.

Apart from the long poem "The Double Image," her book strikes me as unhappy in every sense, not least in that of a gift misapplied.

Martin Dodsworth

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POINTS OF THE COMPASS

Letter from Cyprus

IT'S ALL PEACE, quiet, and sheer luxury in the swimming pool of the Ledra Palace Hotel in Nicosia. The Middle Eastern heat is bright on the dark-blue water; suntanned bodies loll on the elegant deck chairs; stereo-loudspeakers pour out Greek pop songs. Go to the bar or sit down at one of the tables by the water, or just ring the bell: and unsmiling but polite waiters will bring you cool drinks and double-decker sandwiches.... True, on the way down you catch glimpses of United Nations soldiers in the corridors of every floor of the hotel. (Young men, sitting under reading lamps, turning the pages of Danish glossy magazines full of alluring bosoms, a glass of iced orangeade on their right, a light machine-gun on their left.) True, too, that most of those sun-burned young men, diving into the water from the highest springboard or throwing furtive glances at your wife, are all officers of the United Nations peace-keeping force, and swimming on your back and looking up, you sight other blue-beretted U.N. soldiers on the roof of the Ledra Palace. There is the muffled thud of tennis balls from the neighbouring clay court.

"This paradise may turn into a blazing inferno at any moment," you tell yourself a little melodramatically. One has to use the language of tabloid journalism in order to ease one's conscience. But you know it may not, you know it will not. A U.N. debate is imminent, both sides are on their best behaviour, surely you and your wife are as safe as that young soldier on the rooftop.

But what about outside? Here in the water they leave you alone. But outside there are six hundred thousand Cypriots (82% Greeks, 18% Turks) who are *all* eager and determined to explain "the Cyprus problem" to you. You close your eyes and shudder in the sunshine: you know there is no getting away from them. They *will* explain it to you. A pity. Of course, you know *something* about it all, and basically wasn't it very simple and quite amenable to reasonable solution? Why listen to complicating details, bewildering statistics, interminable statements, constitutional articles, grievous wrongs (committed by the other side), so that Cyprus becomes elusive, cloudy, intimidating?

LOOK LEFT as you leave the hotel. Sandbags and walls chipped by rifle bullets. Turn left and cross the Green Line. A few steps take you into the Turkish quarter: misery, semi-starvation, lack of petrol and traffic at a standstill, men sitting in cafés all day long (because they have nothing better to do), children playing in the filth. But turn right: into the rich and elegant Greek section, with its bustling traffic, sports competitions, Russian film week, gaiety, busy tumult. "Poor Turks," you are inclined to say because you are a soft Westerner, known to be of good will, always ready to stick up for the underdog of the moment. Is the problem quite as simple as that? Dive deep into it, from the highest springboard, like the boys in the water of the Ledra Palace swimming pool.

YOU KNOW—of course—that the people of Cyprus are the Cypriots. Not Greeks living in Cyprus, not Turks living in Cyprus, but Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Through usage, this terminology has long ago lost its comic undertone. We do not speak of Chinese Singaporians and Malay Singaporians, or French Guernsians and English Guernsians. But the Greeks and Turks of Cyprus must be called Greek or Turkish Cypriots. The difference between the two is that one nationality speaks bad Greek, the other bad Turkish. Otherwise there is no difference. Except that the Turks are poorer; less well educated, etc. Some people claim they can look at a man and tell for certain whether he is a Turkish or a Greek Cypriot. This is surely nonsense. There are, of course, certain typical Turkish faces and some typical Greek faces, and sometimes it may be possible to tell; but in most cases you cannot. (I should not dare to say what I am saying less than a thousand miles away from Cyprus. U.N. or no U.N., both the Turks and the Greeks would shoot me in the back for it.)

The Greek Cypriots lack a great deal of the charm, sense of humour and natural gaiety of the mainland Greeks. They are less serene, more sullen, take themselves much more seriously. They are not really "Greeks": they *are* Cypriots, resembling the Turks of this island rather than the Greeks of the mainland. The truth remains, that there is not much difference between the two: they are the sons of the same island, the same climate, the same strife.

If the Cypriots are neither very Greek nor very Turkish, they certainly are somewhat English: Britain occupied the island for 82 years and her influence is ubiquitous. Cars still travel on the left-hand side of the road and there is bread-and-butter pudding on the menu of the Ledra Palace. The administration is better and smoother than in Greece, the standard of living

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higher. Many people speak English—so the Cypriots are more articulate *vis-à-vis* the outside world than one would normally expect from so small an island. Cypriots keep English hours: there is no after-lunch siesta here, as on the mainland, and no return to the offices at 5 o'clock for an evening turn. In Cyprus they tried it out but returned to their "good old English habit" of working from 9.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., with an hour's break for lunch.

As in so many former colonies, the grudging respect felt for the English has given way to a feeling of affection, sometimes even called love. This is surprising, and no one was more surprised by it than the Cypriots themselves. More than eighty years of co-existence and about a decade of mutual murder creates a feeling of intimacy. "Yes, I used to love the English," an influential Cypriot lady told me, "but I shall never forgive them for their attitude in the present quarrel. Not because it is what it is—but because it makes it utterly impossible for me to go on loving them...."

THE FOURTH LAYER of the population is the U.N. Force. The Greeks used to be annoyed with them and called them "Tourists." This, for some mysterious reason, was felt to be a grave insult and the U.N., nothing if not sensitive, took it as such. To-day, it is generally recognised that they are doing a fairly good job by keeping the two sides apart. They are not empowered to *do* much more and their commanders (with much understanding, and almost infinite patience) try to reason with people and maintain the *status quo*. No new fortified positions are to be built, and each side is supposed to keep to its present territory. The Greeks are well-off, the Turks are poor; the Greeks lack nothing, the Turks are in need of almost everything. So the U.N. soldiers feel sympathy for the Turks and help them with little gifts; consequently, the Greeks regard them as "pro-Turkish" and "biased." But is a Swedish private from Malmö who gives a small, hungry Turkish child a piece of chocolate, really expressing a political attitude?

The U.N. boys are mostly volunteers, who come for six months and get very good pay. They do their job and remain completely uninvolved in the political situation: they couldn't care less who's right or wrong: none of their business. They are decent young fellows, mostly from the North (northern Europe, like the Swedes, Danes, and Finns, or northern America, like the Canadians). They only wish they could have more sweets for little Turks. They are also terribly sex-starved. Cyprus is a place where virginity is at a premium (as everywhere in Greece or Turkey), and Cypriot girls will not even sit with U.N. soldiers in cafés or go with them to the cinema. The soldiers often live in primitive circumstances, but do their duty good-naturedly, have their wages paid into their bank accounts at home, remember that six months is not a very long time, and are terribly glad that they don't have to understand "the Cyprus problem."

CYPRUS is—of course—in the Middle East. Not only because the climate is much hotter than that of the Greek mainland; not only because the Lebanon is just a hundred miles away and the rugged coast of Asia Minor less than half that; but because the people's mentality is Eastern. The 1960 solution—the creation of the Cypriot State—failed because it was a compromise solution, and compromise, the idea of give-and-take, the *quid pro quo*, would seem to be as strange to the Middle Eastern mind as a murderous family vendetta would be to Yorkshire farmers. In Cyprus "the other side" is always base, mean, treacherous in *everything*, from beginning to end; you yourself are noble and generous. General Grivas, looking back over his EOKA career, found (and said so repeatedly) that he had been right in everything he had done. He had not made one single mistake, not even in minor matters. You might find it strange (he remarked in his book) that one man should always be right: but, strange as it might appear, that was the case. He had, however, an explanation to offer: he must have been guided by providence. He might indeed; all Cypriots are; sometimes it is God, sometimes Allah.

The Cypriot press, I was told again and again, is "the press of the Middle East: scurrilous, libellous, utterly unreliable...." It is also flamboyant, vituperative, and boastful. The "murderers of the Cypriot nation"; the "madmen of NATO"; the "imperialist monsters"; "scandalmongers and intriguers"; "only the British and their agents stand to gain from bloodshed..."—such phrases are among their more moderate formulations.

I was interested to find that political dirt is always mingled with a fair amount of sexual dirt. One day the Turkish press of Nicosia reported that Greek guardsmen had been found in a compromising and unnatural situation in the bushes of the Presidential palace. The scandal was, of course, hushed up and no one heard about it except the Turkish journalist. As a reply to this, *Elephteria* reported that a "Turkish family which had escaped from the hold of Turkish terrorists and sought protection from the Cyprus government" (as far as one knows no such families really exist) "declared that the Turkish rebels have sunk so low

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as to rape even schoolgirls." The implication being, I suppose, that until then only girls over school-leaving age had been raped. Again, the Greek Cypriot press reported that the British had imported fifty "dancing girls" to undermine and corrupt the morals of the Cyprus government (and its senior Civil Servants). No one takes these reports seriously or pretends that there is even a grain of truth in them. They are not even rumours: they are meant as entertaining titbits of no consequence. People read them, nod with satisfaction or faint pleasure, and turn their attention to other matters.

How does one find out from Cyprus papers what is happening in the world? There may or may not be a brief summary of world events but, as a rule, nearly the entire newspaper will deal with Cyprus affairs as though Cyprus were the centre of the universe. And, of course: *it is*. That is the main point I had to grasp. When Khrushchev (in the last days of his power) talked about the terrifying weapons Russia possessed, the only meaning of this—according to the Cyprus press—was that Cyprus was safe. After this, the imperialist monsters would be intimidated and Cyprus could rejoice. Every world event, every declaration made by every world politician, has a bearing on Cyprus, and it depends on Cyprus—and Cyprus alone—whether the world is to live in peace or go to war. And this you realise has become the dividing line, the true Green Line—momentarily, at least—between Turkish and Greek Cypriots. The Turks—isolated and hungry—are passionately interested in food, water supply, bread, work, petrol, and fuel; the Greeks in international politics, war, peace, treaties, pacts with Great Nations, the fate of humanity hanging in their balance. The Cypriots know that they cannot become a World Power; but they have succeeded in becoming a World Problem, which is almost as good.

Simple souls surmise that Cyprus is an overwhelmingly Greek island and so, sooner or later, it should go to Greece. That's how the problem looked to Winston Churchill, who visited the island in 1907.

> "I think that it is only natural that the Cypriot people of Greek descent should regard their incorporation, with what they call their mother-country, as an ideal to be earnestly, devoutly and fervently cherished. Such a feeling is an example of the patriotic devotion which so nobly characterises the Greek nation."

Great Britain actually offered Cyprus to Greece in 1915, as the price for Greece joining the Allies. The Greeks (or rather their king) hesitated; when they did eventually join, it was too late: the Cyprus offer had lapsed. Yet, surely, after giving the necessary safeguards to the minority, shouldn't Cyprus become a part of Greece, like Rhodes, Crete, Chios and the other islands?

However, as soon as the Greek Cypriots begin to elaborate on the justice of their cause, one begins to be plagued by doubts. They tell you that it was "under duress" that they signed the 1960 Zurich and London agreement, which is nonsense; they signed it as free agents, and they were free not to sign it. One has the feeling that they accepted the benefits of that treaty and are now trying to get out of their obligations. "The treaty does not work," they continue, *consequently* it is not valid. What a simple way to get out of treaty obligations! As soon as there is a dispute, the treaty becomes null and void.

The treaty is certainly not null and void but it was awkward and absurd. It guaranteed a certain Turkish quota in the Civil Service; it was never a question of finding "the right person for the right post"; the main thing was that he had to be a Turk. When it turned out that there was a shortage of literate Turks, Dr. Kutchuk insisted that Turks ought to be imported from the mainland rather than have Greek Cypriots appointed. Besides, the constitutionalists, in an attempt to perpetuate the document, declared that it must not be changed. Never. No majority, even in a hundred years, could be empowered to change a single clause. The Turks insisted on every letter of the constitution; while the Greeks, with Makarios in the lead, never missed a chance to show that they held the Turks in rather low esteem. The Turks refused to vote for an income tax law because in their interpretation of the constitution, a definite part of this income tax ought to be devoted to the benefit of the Turks alone. Dr. Kutchuk had the veto in several important matters and could cripple the administration. Municipalities came to a standstill; rigid constitutional rules proved unworkable. Makarios suggested some revisions, a proposal which—thanks to the idiocy of the constitution—seemed itself a breach of the constitution. This triggered off civil war between the two communities, and who really knows exactly how it started? And yet, when you begin to listen to the Turkish argument, you feel that the Greeks might, after all, be right.

They say that Greeks and Turks can *never* live amicably side by side, so partition is the only solution. But minorities live in peace—well, often not in peace, but they *live*, side by side—all over the world. Hungarians live in Roumania, Finns in the Soviet Union, Chinese in Malaysia, Indians in the West Indies, etc. They can all live together—but Turks and Greeks cannot. Of course they *do* live together in

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Istanbul and Rhodes and Western Thrace; but not in Cyprus. If "partition" were the only solution for the minority problem, the whole world would disintegrate into infinitesimal communities. The Turks also say that Cyprus—united to Greece—would be a threat; "a dagger aimed at the heart of Turkey." But there are other Greek islands, nearer to Turkey, and they cause no trouble. And is no threat implicit in the long land-frontier between Turkey and Greece? On top of it all, Greece and Turkey are allies; apart from Cyprus, they do not have much to quarrel about just now; so why should a Cyprus united to Greece be a threat to an ally?

THE TROUBLE IS that there is not one Cyprus question but many. Greece wants *Enosis*, unity with Cyprus, and Turkey wants partition—and as far as the world knows— this is "the Cyprus problem." But it is not. Britain wants bases to guard her route to the Persian Gulf. America prefers the staunch, reliable, anti-Communist Turks to the fickle Greeks. (Fickle Greece fought on the Allied side in two world wars; reliable Turkey fought against them in the first and remained neutral in the second.) Russia wants a foothold in the Mediterranean and knows that it is easier to undermine Cyprus than Greece. Nasser regards the Cyprus trouble as an excellent lever for getting rid of some British bases in the Mediterranean. Official Turkey does not really care quite so much for her hundred thousand people in Cyprus as it seems (and it used to be said quite openly, not so long ago). There are many more Turks in Bulgaria or in the Soviet Union; they are never even mentioned. But she is in an awkward situation, under grave internal pressure. We had a saying in Hungarian: "I've caught a Turk and now he won't let me go." Turkey has caught a hundred thousand Turks (or Turkish Cypriots) and they won't let her go. The Greek Cypriots, as I have already suggested, appear to be more interested in bullying the world and reminding it of their own importance than in *Enosis*. The "Cyprus problem" is really buried under its own side-issues. Only the Greeks on the mainland seem to remember how it all began: and they are considered terribly out-of-date.

The world is shrinking; units become larger and larger; Continental countries embrace one another with some reluctance and form Common Markets and Eftas; it takes less than four hours to cross the Atlantic. Yet, all the time, tinier and tinier states are being born. Malta becomes a nation. Cyprus becomes a nation. And as though Cyprus were not small enough as it is, we are told that she must be divided up still further.

Cypriots talk of "unrestricted independence." Great Britain listens to them wistfully. How nice it would be for Britain to achieve unrestricted independence. A dream Britain gave up long ago. But not Cyprus.

CYPRUS, in a way, has achieved *all* her aims, however contradictory. Greeks and Turks do live "amicably together" on the island: in Limassol, for example, the Turks were defeated, hence there is no dividing line, no "Green Line" between the communities. The same situation prevails in a few villages. In these places everyone watches the Turks moving about and living among Greeks as though it were a miracle—as though it had not been the normal situation for centuries.

But Cyprus has also achieved partition. The island is, to all intents and purposes, divided into a Turkish part and a Greek part. The Green Line is a challenge to everyone. Diplomats, soldiers and journalists may cross it freely. But any ordinary Greek or Turkish Cypriot would probably be shot or at least arrested if he ventured across. (So everyone longs to cross it.) The Turks are cut off from the sea in most of their areas, so their longing for the world at large is more rational. Nicosia is a divided city, like Berlin or Jerusalem; many Greek Cypriots are tormented by the desire—or at least the itch —to cross the Line, simply because the Line is there. People are like that. I am sure Adam did not really like apples at all.

Many Cypriots long, at the same time, to return to normalcy. It is nice to be at the centre of world interest but you can have too much of a good thing. "We want tourists again," a Cypriot politician told me. "I really don't know why they've stopped coming. It's very quiet here now, isn't it?"

An American friend, a writer of travel-books, nodded seriously. "I'm sure you are right," he said. "People are fond of adventure, and Americans like it more than other people. It's all a question of angling your advertisement. You could turn it into a challenge. Why not say, for example: ARE YOU BRAVE ENOUGH TO COME TO CYPRUS? Or perhaps it might appeal to Texans if you said: COME TO CYPRUS AND SHOOT IT OUT! You might add: JOIN ANY SIDE YOU LIKE. . . ."

THERE IS ONE dreaded moment in the life of all dreamers: the moment when their dreams come true. It's wonderful to cherish a grudge and to fight for an ideal. But what happens when the grudge disappears or the ideal is achieved? Such a turn of events has been the source of endless disappointments, even tragedies.

The Cypriots are in grave danger. World public opinion is slowly coming round and

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people have begun to say what they ought to have been saying from a long time: why should a Greek island be prevented from becoming a Greek island? *Enosis* is on the horizon (vaguely and dimly as yet) but even this is a grim warning to many Greek Cypriots.

A number of Greek Cypriots still want *Enosis*: Grivas still wants it, some of his National Guardsmen still want it. But the Communists—a formidable proportion of the Cyprus population—do not want it. Their brief is not to join a NATO power, not to increase the strength of the Atlantic Alliance. And why should they be so keen on joining a country where the Communist Party is banned while in Cyprus it is free? Russia wants a foothold in the Eastern Mediterranean, not a NATO base in a Greek Cyprus.

Extreme right—as so often happens—joins hands with extreme left. Many of the big capitalists of Cyprus do not find the prospect of becoming part of Greece any too attractive. The standard of living is higher in Cyprus than it is in Greece. The Cyprus pound is a better currency than the drachma. The Civil Service is more efficient than in Greece. And the people, not to speak of the politicians, have got used to being the centre of the universe. Cyprus is an independent state, a member of the U.N., a factor in international politics: is it really such an attraction to become a mere province of Greece? Makarios is President of an independent state; does he really want to become the archbishop of a small island? He says he does. He said so to me. Otherwise he speaks of "unrestricted independence. Only when that is achieved, Cyprus will decide what to do." Of course, I do not doubt the President's word, but I'm sure many of his ministers and Civil Servants do not share His Beatitude's nobility of spirit. Having been potentates of a famous little country, they are not keen on becoming insignificant, provincial bureaucrats. There are signs of tension between Greece and Cyprus, even minor signs of friction. (The Cypriots resent the alleged interference of Greek army officers with the running of the National Guards; one Greek diplomat has even been expelled from Cyprus; and while Greece is canvassing support in the West, stating that a Greek Cyprus would be a gain for NATO, President Makarios gaily proclaims that it is a *condition* of *Enosis* to dismantle all military bases on the island.)

While talking to the Archbishop of the present problems, I recalled the struggle for *Enosis* of another large Greek island, Crete. That successful struggle was led by another politician who also became a national hero of Greece, just like Archbishop Makarios. That other politician eventually became Premier of Greece and is nowadays almost generally recognised as one of the greatest Greek statesmen. His name was Venizelos. Listening to Archbishop Makarios, I wondered whether *he* ever remembered this story; and if he did, whether it ever occurred to him that *Sisone* might be a practical programme. This is, of course, the reverse of *Enosis*. Why not attach Greece to Cyprus? Not as a colony of course; but as a union of free nations. It would be so much easier.

WAS IT ALL really necessary?

Some called the EOKA fighters terrorists, others called them heroes. They massacred innocent citizens and they, in turn, were hanged sometimes just for possessing firearms. Leaving moral judgment aside, one has the awful feeling that the whole EOKA struggle was a little pointless. Wouldn't they have achieved independence without it? Malta became independent without an EOKA—indeed, without a single bomb being exploded. And scores of other countries, too. Why did EOKA occur in Cyprus, of all places?

I do not know the answer, but I have a vague suspicion. There are comic undertones to the word *Cypriot*. They know that they are neither fish nor fowl; neither Europeans nor people of the real Middle East; neither Greeks nor Turks ...."Cypriots." Turkish and Greek Cypriots are alike; in fact, indistinguishable from their mortal enemies. Here is a people in search of its true identity. It has an element of despair in it, and sometimes an element of schizophrenia. A man in search of his "true self" may easily become violent...because he can never, never find what he is looking for.

Perhaps sexual starvation has a part to play in it, too. I was forcibly struck by the strange mixture of politics and pornography, and nothing could be more natural than the obscenity of violence. A gun can, after all, be a sexual organ. A poor one—but still a sexual organ. Mods and Rockers throw fireworks around on Margate beach; others throw bombs in Cyprus. I cannot suppress my feeling that had the Cypriot girls been just a shade less virtuous, the history of Cyprus would be less eventful and much happier.

TAKE A TOUR of Nicosia. Cross over into the Turkish quarter. U.N. officers are your guides and they know all the Turks—who are poor, often in rags, hungry, barefooted. Here are the spots where wicked Greeks killed Turkish children (but then wicked Turks in turn killed Greek children, in the grisly balancing of accounts). All Greek notices have disappeared; it's Turkey now. Everywhere pictures of Makarios on the walls—complete with horns

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and hooves. A stroke of luck: a Turkish taxi happens to have a drop of petrol and is ready to drive to the village of Mandres Hamit, sixteen kilometres away. It used to be a village of 200 souls; by now it's become a tent town of 3,500 inhabitants. All are Turkish refugees from a nearby village, called Omorphita, and all live in tents in indescribable filth, without proper sanitation, without proper food. There is nothing they can (or would) do all day except sit around and gape at each other. No jobs. Trapped. No doctors. And the school for the children? Opening soon. To-morrow. Or the day after to-morrow.... The place is a sink of filth and squalor, poverty and hopelessness. No electricity, no lighting of any sort. When darkness falls, it means complete and utter darkness in Mandres Hamit.

One's political sympathies? Probably with the Greeks. But one's human sympathies are with the Turks (not because they are more virtuous, simply because they need it more).

The Turks can actually *see* their former dwelling places from here. But the Greeks will not let them go back to their looted and half-destroyed village three miles away because these are not "people" but a means to "put pressure on the Turks" and "teach them a lesson." They are "traitors" and have only got their just deserts. The Turks will not help either, because these are not "people" but a means to "show the world how cruel, barbarous, heartless the Greeks really are...."

Back in the bar of the hotel on the Greek side, there is a gin and tonic, a discussion of Russian pressure and the rumoured rift between Makarios and Grivas. I think of that little Turkish boy of four who looked at me with huge, black eyes and shouted an impish *"hallo,"* and who will go to sleep to-night with ten other people in a black, stinking tent. But how foolish. One must learn to think in terms of diplomatic notes and military bases and international pressure.

George Mikes

AUTHORS

Alexander Solzhenitsyn's sketches were first published in Russian by *Grani* (Frankfurt), and the copyright is owned by Possev Verlag....

Louis Kronenberger contributed "A Taste of Money" to the May 1964 ENCOUNTER. He is the author of *Company Manners*, and *The Republic of Letters*, and edited (with W. H. Auden) the *Faber Book of Aphorisms*. He writes: "I'm at work on a book (which will include the Horace Walpole piece) that concerns writing—whether by poets, playwrights, letter-writers, memoir-writers or novelists—with a social texture and a wordly tone. Much, perhaps half, of this means returning to a period I once but have not lately worked in: the 18th century...."

Herbert Luethy is the well-known Swiss historian who contributes regularly to ENCOUNTER. Among his recent articles were "Calvinism & Capitalism" (January 1964), "Culture & the Cold War" (June 1963), and "Has Switzerland a Future?" (December 1962)....

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The drawing of Horace Walpole was made by **Colin Spencer** after a drawing by George Dance in the National Portrait Gallery....

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LETTERS

Are Opinion Polls Adequate?

PROFESSOR H. J. EYSENCK has been a friend of mine for thirty years. During that time I cannot recall, however hard I try, having had a discussion with him about Opinion Polls. Our material, from time to time, has been utilised by Professor Eysenck in his writings; apart from that, nothing. Last summer, like a bolt from Zeus, a letter from him was published in *The Times*, criticising polls and advancing suggestions for the future. He appeared on the TV screen and now he is writing in ENCOUNTER. The owl of Minerva and the sword of Damocles, combined in one, is perhaps an apt description of Eysenck in his new role.

That his criticisms have all been discussed on many earlier occasions; that the specific points advanced do not seem to be very precisely stated and that Professor Eysenck himself makes no claim to be an expert in the field, are no reasons for not treating his article seriously. One assumption will be made; that references such as "lack of competence," "complacency," "lack of progressiveness," "polls have been rather parasitic," "the exaggerated simplicity of the questions," "Durant ... whistling to keep up his courage" are Eysenck's own particular *façon de parler* and they will be treated as such. Let us look at the substance of specific points he develops against polls. They are two: (1) Polls were showing differences between their figures in the pre-election period. (2) Polls cause a band-wagon effect.

(1) Faced with Eysenck's own terminology and nothing else, one would have difficulty in knowing what he is talking about, he is so vague and imprecise. "... the actual disparity or disagreement, it has been as high as 9 per cent at times. ..." Here Eysenck must be referring to the difference in the size of the Labour lead that Gallup was showing as compared with National Opinion Polls. But Eysenck in saying this is surely aware that any serious criticism must ignore this simple aspect, which is the end result of two agglomerations, and must compare the respective figures for the level of the Conservative support and the figures for the level of Labour support. This is the only way to make a proper assessment of the performance of the two polls, and any other way is completely unscientific and can be misleading.

Eysenck points out that the differences were always in the same direction. Why this should have been so we cannot say: we ourselves took all our figures straight off computer sheets. This is the first and only time in the world's history that any kind of survey organisation, academic or commercial, has committed itself in advance to doing such a thing. Our errors were small. Does Eysenck want to maintain his charge of "lack of progressiveness" against us?

When, over sixteen years ago, Dr. Gallup made his error of 5.6 per cent in forecasting Truman's share of the vote he tried to learn from his mistakes. His error during the last sixteen years, as compared to prior to 1948, has been cut by one-half. Is this "complacency"?

It is relevant in this context that when Maurice Kendall was Professor at the London School of Economics he organised, with a group of survey agencies, a series of experiments in the methodological field covering several years, the results being published in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*. The agency staffs gave up a lot of time and bore the quite considerable cost of their fieldwork. The series was terminated not because the agencies pulled out, but because the academic interest evaporated when Maurice Kendall left. Was this being "parasitic" on academic disciplines?

(2) Band-wagon effect. Not often in the social science field does one have the chance to be categorical. Here is such a chance, however, and I am taking it. Polls do not cause a band-wagon and there is not the slightest evidence that they do. There is an enormous amount of evidence that they do not. Firstly, if there were a band-wagon then the voting line for the leading candidate would

ON THE DAY *of the Leyton by-election in which Patrick Gordon Walker (then the Labour Government's Foreign Secretary) was defeated,* The Guardian *published (January 22nd) a long news summary of Professor H. J. Eysenck's* ENCOUNTER *article on "The Pollsters" together with a defence by Mr. Humphrey Taylor of the National Opinion Polls. The next day it also published the following letter by Mr. Taylor:*

"It was very kind of you to give so much space to my comments on Professor Eysenck's criticisms of the polls. It might have been less embarrassing for me, however, if you had not found room for my claim for the increasing accuracy of our by-election surveys on the very day that Leyton produced our worst ever by-election result.

"Professor Eysenck suggests that we are complacent. I for one am now shocked and puzzled. While we have always known sample surveys cannot provide an exact forecast of how people will actually behave five or six days later, there has usually been a close correspondence between stated voting intention and actual voting behaviour. At Leyton there was not.

"Some possible explanations for the discrepancy emerged from our own poll: Labour apathy and reluctance to vote; the low poll, which we had suggested as hurting Labour most; and widespread disapproval, even among Labour supporters, of the way in which the Prime Minister created a vacancy for Mr. Gordon Walker.

"There are other less plausible explanations, but theorising is not enough. We must go back to Leyton to find out who changed their minds, and why they did so. We have started interviewing already."

HUMPHREY TAYLOR
National Opinion Polls Ltd.

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rise, because he would get increased support because he is shown to be ahead. The lines of candidates shown to be in the lead sometimes go up, sometimes remain stable, sometimes go down. There is no general rule.

Advocates of the band-wagon theory hold a poor view of voters. They consider that voters regard elections as horse-races and the voters are merely concerned with backing the winner. Elections are, however, much more correctly described as debates, with everyone anxious to get his views expressed. It is not surprising, therefore, to find a majority of the voters saying that they intend to vote for a candidate also saying at the same time that they do not expect him to win; they expect him to lose. Where is the band-wagon?

A purely practical point, overlooked by band-wagoners, is that even at the time of a General Election, and in spite of all the time spent on poll results by radio and TV, only a minority of the public, 25 per cent, can say what the polls are, in fact, showing. If they don't know, how can they be influenced? In any case, those who do know are the better educated and, therefore, are the least likely to be influenced by a poll. It is time that "band-wagon" was buried once and for all; anyone who resurrects it is wasting public time.

Eysenck wants an independent institute, orientated towards scientific research. That is what we all want. But everything has to have a beginning and it would not be a bad start for Eysenck to acknowledge and discuss with me the specific offer I made through the columns of *The Times* to help him to look at the work we are doing.

An election forecast is the only instance where the persons responsible have to stand up and be counted without the benefit of clergy; they know that there is no escape from having to go through this hoop. They know that their livelihood is at stake and they know that in the event of being wrong on an important election no one will have any mercy on them. Aren't these enough conditions to make it in their own interest to do as good a job as possible without needing an academic goad to be applied to the more tender portions of their anatomy?

HENRY DURANT

Social Surveys (Gallup Poll) Limited, London

Death in Dallas

YOUR December, 1964, issue contained an article by D. W. Brogan appropriately sub-titled "Myths After Kennedy," for it contained to my knowledge not a single factual assertion. Sir Denis confessed that he was "not nearly as quick as Lord Russell, Mr. Ralph Schoenman and Mr. Mark Lane, who had their opinions ready even before the Report was issued." This peripheral mystery could have been solved by Sir Denis, for had he contacted any of the three persons he listed he would have discovered that we all had copies of the Report in advance of its official release. Sir Denis, however, not only reads slowly, but unfortunately inaccurately as well. He asserts: "Mr. Mark Lane may produce his missing witness and show that Oswald, Ruby and Tippit did know each other." The Warren Report which Sir Denis proposed to analyse reveals to those whether they read slowly or quickly no allegation made by me regarding such a meeting. There was a meeting held at Jack Ruby's night club, the "Carousel," attended by Officer Tippit and Bernard Weissman, the gentleman who placed the full-page insulting advertisement which appeared in the *Dallas Morning News* on the day of the assassination. Ruby also attended the meeting. The Commission, in fact, secured a mass of data proving that Ruby knew Officer Tippit, including Ruby's own statements made prior to November 24 to that effect. They secured information from Ruby's associate in the "Carousel" Club, Larry Crafard, that Ruby knew Weissman and that Weissman had visited the "Carousel" Club on several occasions.

Sir Denis alleges that there is "no evidence" that Ruby was a gangster or even "a friend of gangsters." It is difficult to believe that that assertion was made after Sir Denis read the Warren Report or the testimony adduced by the Commission. The Commission found that Ruby was closely associated with leading gangsters. Sir Denis asserts that anybody placed in the window who was "a reasonably good shot" could have struck the President. Oswald's Marine Corps record, presented to the Commission, showed that he was a "rather poor shot." In addition, the world's rifle Olympic champion stated that the performance Oswald allegedly secured from the ancient Italian weapon was superior to the performance that he, the rifle champion, could have secured. Despite glib statements regarding the easy task confronting a reasonably good shot, neither Sir Denis nor the Commission can produce a rifle expert who can emulate that degree of accuracy with that particular weapon.

Sir Denis blandly asserts that the "thorough autopsy made at the Naval Hospital at Bethseda" resolves all questions as to the medical aspect of the case. Has Sir Denis read the testimony of the Naval Commander, Dr. J. J. Humes, who conducted the autopsy? Does he know that Commission exhibit number 397, contained in volume 17, page 48, is a certificate signed by Dr. Humes confessing that he "destroyed by burning" his original notes regarding the autopsy he conducted? Does Sir Denis realise that Dr. Humes testified that the photographs and X-rays taken of the President's body during the autopsy were removed before they were developed by agents of the F.B.I., and not made available subsequently either to Dr. Humes or to the members of the Warren Commission?

Sir Denis asserts that "it is not true that Oswald was denied legal aid." It will be difficult to sustain that argument since millions of Americans heard Oswald appeal to reporters for a lawyer over a national network television broadcast on November 22 and November 23.

Might one suggest to Sir Denis that he owes to his readers a certain amount of work, including reading the document which he analyses, before rushing into print. His apologies for the American Establishment are undoubtedly applauded in the

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London

THERE *is something slightly odious in the suggestion inherent in much that is written and spoken about Russian literature that what the Russian writers want is to achieve the integrity and freedom of Western writers. Why? What have we got to be pleased about?* TRIBUNE

Moscow

A STATE COMMITTEE *to control Russian publishing and the printing industry has been set up in Moscow, headed by Mr. Pavel Romanov, the former chief of the Soviet Censorship. Mr. Romanov's new job seems to be one of the results of the recent plenary meeting of the Central Committee on ideological matters. The Ministry of Culture, it was felt, was not exercising enough control over books, magazines, the printing industry and newsprint in general. A similar state committee is acting as a watchdog over the film industry. This will leave the Ministry of Culture as a prestige body without executive powers.* SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Washington

WE ARE *amused by the Johnsonian declaration that "for the first time in history, profits are higher than ever before." With the above offering, the Chief has taken his place alongside those forgotten orators who reminded us that "The future lies ahead," and that "The boys of today will be the men of tomorrow."*

WASHINGTON STAR

London

PROFESSOR *Robert Graves, his grey hair curly as a satyr's, held impish court in one of the National Theatre's Nissen huts yesterday to explain what he called his "re-Shakespearing" of "Much Ado About Nothing" for next February's production. The new version was, it appears, the fruit of a spell of enforced idleness in hospital coupled with a commission from Mr. Kenneth Tynan who said he had noticed a survey which showed that grammar school sixth-formers and first year university students did not want to see Shakespeare productions because they were afraid they would not understand the language. Professor Graves, with sideswipes at contemporary printers, the Oxford English Dictionary, and the New English Bible, defended his reconstruction of the Bard against some rather respectful criticism. It was all a question of "thinking in Elizabethan." If you had been raised on King James' Bible you would know that "a lodge in a warren" meant not "a country house in a rabbit hole" but "a shed in a deer park." If you had been raised on "that damn modern Bible" you wouldn't. The name of the late Dr. Bowdler was not invoked, but it seems ironic that having revised Shakespeare in the name of decency and restored him in the name of scholarship we have now begun revising him again in the name of intelligibility.* THE GUARDIAN

Copenhagen

A YOUNG SOLDIER *was sent to the guardhouse for 20 days here today for broadcasting excerpts of Henry Miller's novel* Tropic of Cancer *over a powerful radio transmitter in the official North Atlantic Treaty Organisation military code.*

What happened, the military prosecutor said, was that the coded transmission was monitored by NATO *radio stations throughout Western Europe. The result was general consternation. The prosecutor told the court that the* NATO *headquarters in Paris later used recorded excerpts from the transmission for educational purposes, holding it up as one of the worst examples of abuse of a military radio transmitter.*

NEW YORK TIMES

New York

THE MISSILE GAP *has come and gone, along with the Rift Between the Two Cultures and the Call to Build a Bridge Between the Humanities and the Sciences. Whether the Liberal Arts Are Dead or have emerged more vigorous than ever as an essential antidote to Narrow Specialization may be in doubt. But there can be no question about the Explosion of Knowledge and the Population Explosion. These are today's complexities which are, however, offset by a new cure-all—Creativity.*

Task Forces (which produce Master Plans) have replaced committees. Dialogues have crowded out the monographs. Cold War Tensions have been superseded by Urban Problems and the Crisis of De-facto Segregated Housing Patterns.

There is less talk of Over-and Under-Achievers but more about the Culturally Deprived Child from a Disadvantaged Socio-Economic Environment which blocks the Upward Mobility of Minority Groups. In some places, incidentally, Minority Groups are now referred to as "non-white," whereas white majority pupils (who are often in the minority) are, in terms of the Ethnic Census, known as "others." When "others" are in the majority, a school is integrated, but when "non-whites" exceed, the school is Racially Imbalanced.

Action takes many forms: there is no money for serious efforts; an On-Going Program has enough money for the year and hope of another foundation grant thereafter; a Controlled Experiment means that The New Approach will be made to look good in comparison with an unfavourably rigged Control Group.

Of course, there are always Breakthroughs.

NEW YORK TIMES

West Berlin

"AT PRESENT," *W. H. Auden said, "I'm living in Berlin and am a guest at Professor Hoellerer's Seminar on Literature at the University. I've only been there once. They were discussing Hellmut Heissenbuettel's critique of Mary McCarthy's novel,* The Group. *What could I say? I made a few jokes. But no one laughed. . . ."*

DIE WELT

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United States, but nevertheless, if subjected to critical assessment, a reasonable person must conclude that they are wholly unrelated to the facts. Hopefully, Sir Denis will purchase a copy of the Warren Commission Report, read it thoroughly, perhaps even slowly, and then, some time in the future, accurately set out to assess it.

MARK LANE

The British "Who Killed Kennedy?" Committee
London SW1

[ED. NOTE.—*Professor Brogan is at present travelling in the United States. He will be returning to the theme of President Kennedy's murder and the Warren Commission's full 26-volume report in an early number of* ENCOUNTER.

Meanwhile, two small points, just for the record. (1) *Sir Denis Brogan's name was carelessly misspelt throughout Mr. Lane's letter; we have taken the liberty of correcting it, on the theory that even the smallest of details are important.* (2) *Some time after receipt of his letter and its dispatch to the printers for early publication, we were surprised to learn that Mr. Lane, having looked in vain for it in the January* ENCOUNTER (*which had gone to press a week before his letter was written*), *had entered a protest with the Press Council, jumping to the conclusion that we had "refused" to publish. The galley proof was sent off to both the author and the Press Council on the theory, again, that verifiable facts (a telephone call would have sufficed to get at the truth of the matter) are also important. In view of this (uncharacteristic?) instance of a false conclusion drawn from an unwarranted assumption, we imagine that Mr. Lane is not finding it difficult to understand why other charges and allegations of his are being generally taken with a pinch of salt.*]

English Catholics

MR. BERNARD BERGONZI has written a remarkable, well-considered and indeed disturbingly perspicacious article on the subject of the English Catholics [ENCOUNTER, January]. I detect only one descent into bias.

He says of the recent reforms in Roman Catholic liturgy, "It is perhaps a mark of psychological immaturity to be emotionally and aesthetically attached to particular liturgical forms," adding with consoling condescension, "but it is quite a common reaction." It is and should be a common reaction to be emotionally attached to satisfying aesthetic forms. That the Roman Catholic liturgy needed reformation has been evident since the teaching of Latin has diminished in education. There are, of course, many people who have a temperamental dislike of all reform, but there are many Catholics whose present distress is not at reform, but at the fact that the liturgical movement bears too much resemblance to the efforts of those restorers of Gothic architecture who, in the nineteenth century, removed all poetry, splendour, and interest from countless French, German, and English churches. It is not (not even "perhaps") psychologically immature to deplore the atrocities in this line of Viollet-le-Duc and the renovations of ancient buildings by Gilbert Scott and William Butterfield. Not everything that these enthusiasts did was bad, but most of their restoration work, as opposed to their original work, is utterly repulsive. The conceited spirit in which they restored is manifest today.

The Mass of the Presanctified, as conducted in the former Latin rite for Good Friday, was probably the greatest work of art in liturgical form that could be imagined. There was nothing like it in the whole art of the whole world. After following it, even a Beethoven symphony could sound quite tame. The reformed service, which now takes its place, is very decent and respectable, much easier to follow, much more quickly grasped and understood than the old, which had to be attended several times before its meaning was clear, and which afterwards always suggested further meanings. There is much to be said for simplicity on Good Friday, but those who, remembering what used to be there, find the new Good Friday ceremony nothing much more than respectable, and lacking in interest, are not merely petty and childish. It is not immature to admire that kind of great poetry which has been unconsciously formed by centuries of devotion and varied custom. Of such poetry was the now lost Mass of Good Friday.

It must be recognised that the whole of this dispute about liturgy is radically unimportant. The faith is what matters. To become an art gallery is the death of a religion. Nevertheless art and religion would seem to be indissolubly bound. There is every reason to hope and believe that Catholic faith will ultimately find expression, given time, in new art comparable to the old. That time is not now. Today the demolition men are in charge. Their ministrations may be necessary, but Mr. Bergonzi, and his many sympathisers, must not assume that it is only retarded persons who do not respect them and their function more than the artists whose work they are demolishing, and who give more than "a moment of regret" when the masterpieces of former times are thrown away, never to be recovered or seen again.

CHRISTOPHER SYKES

Shute House,
Donhead St. Mary,
Dorset

ONE minor point in Bernard Bergonzi's article on English Catholicism: Darton, Longman & Todd are not exclusively "Catholic" publishers. Our list is thoroughly ecumenical, sometimes inter-religious, and we also have a General list (no fiction, however).

We would be most grateful if you could pass this information on to your readers. One gets a "name"—we hope ours could be catholic, as well as "Catholic."

JOHN M. TODD

Darton, Longman & Todd,
London

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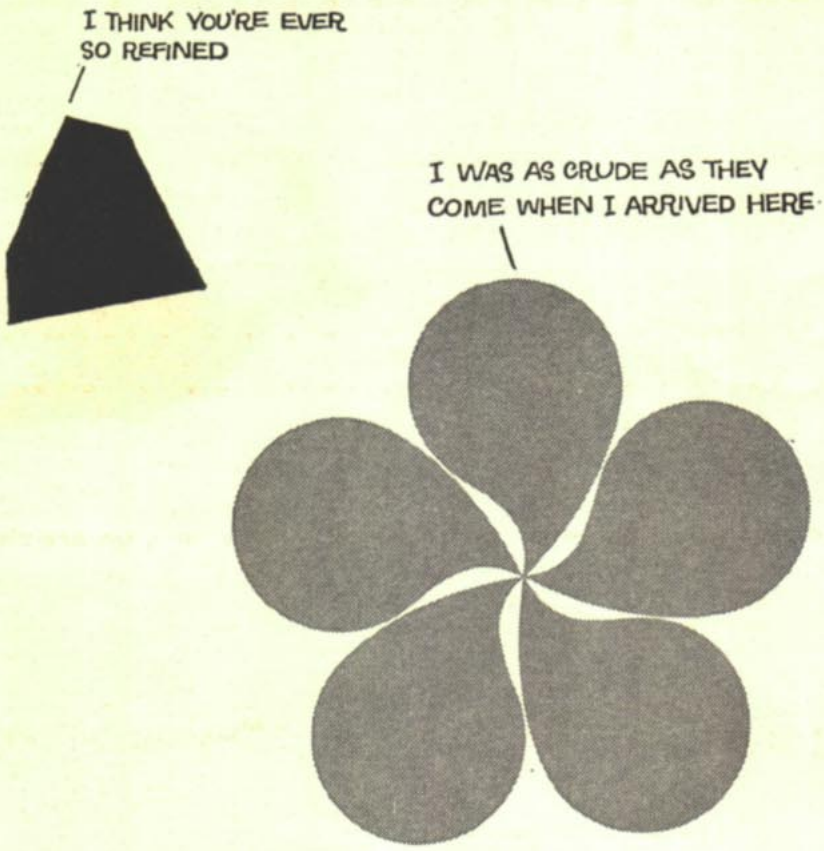
THAMES-SIDE STORY



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